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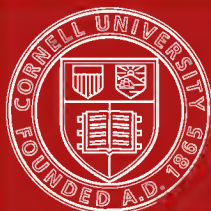
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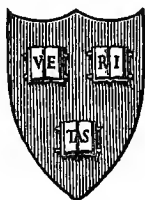




HARVARD STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE  
VOLUME III

# THE COMEDIES OF HOLBERG

BY  
OSCAR JAMES CAMPBELL, JR.  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN THE  
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## PREFACE

**T**HIS volume is the fruit of investigations begun while I was a student in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in Harvard University, and continued while I was a Sheldon Fellow of Harvard in Copenhagen, Paris, and Oxford.

I am indebted for information and counsel to many professors in the University of Copenhagen, and to other Danish scholars, most of all, however, to Dr. Georg Brandes and Dr. Vilhelm Andersen, whose writings on Holberg are of peculiar value and whose conversation I found particularly stimulating during my residence in Denmark. Mr. Carl Petersen, Under-Librarian of the Royal Library in Copenhagen, who is now publishing a definitive edition of Holberg's works, also gave me the benefit of his expert knowledge on various points, and I profited by definite suggestions from Mr. Alfred Glahn, Second Master of the Academy at Sorø, and Professor Verner Dahlerup.

My colleague, Professor Karl Young, has helped me by his acute criticism of the book throughout, and my former teacher, Professor Kittredge, in spite of the enormous demands upon his time, has read it most carefully in proof, to my great advantage.

Professor C. H. C. Wright has also kindly read the proofs. To Professor Schofield I am under the heaviest obligations. He first suggested to me the subject of the work, and during the entire progress of my researches never wearied in his interest. Early, he indicated many fruitful lines of enquiry, and ensured for me the aid of Scandinavian scholars. Recently, he has scrutinized the whole manuscript and various proofs of the volume with very generous attention. Only he can appreciate how large a part he has played in bringing it into being in its present form.

O. J. C., JR.

*Madison, December 3, 1913*

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## INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HOUGH Ludvig Holberg has been variously called the father of Danish history, Danish philosophy, Danish drama, and the Danish national theatre, it is as the father of Danish comedy that he is most frequently exalted. His comedies are to-day the most popular of any presented in Copenhagen. Even now, so long after their original production, they affect the sentiments of the youth of Denmark in much the same way that Schiller's tragedies affect the sentiments of the youth of Germany. Since Holberg's comedies are felt by the Danes to be distinctively national, they have peculiar interest for students of Northern civilization. In addition, however, they merit careful examination by all literary historians because of their close relationship with other European writings of a similar sort. The works of few men afford such ample material for an instructive study in comparative literature.

Danish drama, when Holberg began to write, had no traditions. The circumstances of his life gave him unusual opportunities to become familiar with foreign productions, and he wisely sought models for his new ventures abroad. His youth and early manhood were spent in almost incessant travel. He vis-

ited Holland, France, Germany, and Italy, besides spending two years in England. His occupations, moreover, in these various countries were not merely those of a special student: he possessed always the varied interests of a keen man of the world. Even as a professor in the University of Copenhagen, he taught successively metaphysics, Latin, and history, and finally became Treasurer of the Corporation. As a scholar, he produced works on international law, finance, and history. As a man of letters, he wrote satires, biographies, and moral essays, as well as plays. As a citizen, he helped to found the National Theatre, built up a large private fortune, was made a baron, and bequeathed his whole estate to the support of a national academy.

Of all Holberg's literary work, his comedies reflect best his cosmopolitan interests. The object of this volume is to consider these comedies in relation to their sources, and to show thereby how the author's distinctive dramatic qualities developed through his imitation of foreign models. Numerous as the books on Holberg have been, no study with such a purpose has previously been made. Those who have hitherto treated his relation to comic tradition have adopted one of two critical methods. Either, like Legrelle, they have examined his indebtedness to one source

only, and have therefore overemphasized the importance of a single influence; or, like Olaf Skavlan, they have been content to give lists, more or less complete, of his mere comic devices, without drawing inferences from the similarities they indicate, and without discussing larger phases of dramatic construction. In the following study I shall aim to make a consideration of sources the means of appraising and describing impartially Holberg's originality.

The influences which did most to determine Holberg's conception of comedy were those of Molière, of the *commedia dell' arte* (in the form which it assumed in Gherardi's collection of plays, produced in the late seventeenth century), and of certain kinds of English comedy and satire. I shall try to show that Holberg learned from Molière many of his methods for the grouping and exposition of character; that he derived from the *commedia dell' arte* much of the comedy incidental to his plots, together with the figures that served as vehicles for it; and that he allowed English comedy and satire to determine, in large measure, the scope and the temper of his own. I shall point out, moreover, for the sake of completeness, the considerably less important suggestions that he obtained from French literature other than Molière,

from Latin comedy, and from his slight acquaintance with German literature.

The combination of these various elements into a unified and original product could have been accomplished only by a man of profound originality as well as large cosmopolitan interests. Holberg gained his broad intelligence by steadily doing his utmost to become an intellectual citizen of Europe as a whole. Any thorough treatment, then, of the manner in which he adapted foreign literary ideas to his own purposes must be preceded by a record of the events of his life.

## **HOLBERG'S LIFE**





## CHAPTER I

### HOLBERG'S LIFE

#### I

**T**HOUGH destined to be the first to give national literary consciousness to Denmark, Holberg was a native of Norway. He was born in Bergen, on the third of December, 1684. Yet Bergen in the seventeenth century was not typically Norwegian. It was one of the four historic trading stations of the Hanseatic League, and had a highly organized, self-sufficing colony of German commercial agents.\* Merchants of many other nationalities also assembled there to procure whatever part of the trade these Germans could not monopolize, and, when they became permanent residents of the city, often married Norwegian women, so that in Holberg's time few children of his birthplace could assert that all four of their grandparents were of Scandinavian stock.

The spirit of Bergen in the latter part of the seventeenth century had become distinctly cosmopolitan. The sons of prosperous tradesmen went abroad, usually both to Holland and to England, where intellectual life was more enlightened and stimulating than at home. Perhaps as a result of this situation, the inhabitants seem to have been more eager and

alert than those either of the rest of Norway or of Denmark.\*

Ludvig Holberg was the twelfth and youngest child of gifted parents. His mother, Karen Lem, was a granddaughter of Bishop Ludvig Munthe, and a woman of keen intelligence. His father was an army officer, who had risen from a mere private to the rank of first lieutenant, an achievement by no means easy or usual in those days, when almost all Norwegian regiments were officered by Germans. What is more, he had seen much of the world. He had served in the armies of Malta and Venice, and had taken an extensive journey through Italy on foot. He died when Ludvig was but two years old, leaving his family with a comfortable inheritance, which was, however, almost completely lost by fire in 1686.

As a boy, Holberg went first to the German grammar school in Bergen and afterwards to the Latin school there. Danish must have seemed to him fit only for colloquial use. The great fire that swept the town in 1702 destroyed the Latin school and compelled him to go to the University of Copenhagen a year earlier than he had intended. In spite of one long interruption, he finished his course at the end of two years, and took his final examinations in the spring of 1704. The course of study at the university could hardly have been congenial to him. Instruction in philosophy, the principal subject, was given

by means of the old scholastic methods, and students held serious, formal debates on questions like these : "Could a human being by a natural process turn into a pillar of salt?" "Did Jesus, a child of God, cry at all during his infancy?" Such pedantic discussions, the solemn futility of which Holberg was later to parody, seemed to him, even then, ridiculous. It is small wonder, then, that he barely passed his so-called "philosophical" examination.\* In theology he obtained honours; but his intellectual enthusiasm seems to have been aroused mainly by work in the modern languages, especially English, French, and Italian, which he studied by himself during his years at the university.

After Holberg had taken his degree, he returned to Bergen, where for several months he acted as tutor to the children of a bishop, Niels Smidt. This ecclesiastic had travelled widely in his youth, and had kept a journal of his expeditions. Holberg read the book with avidity, and it fanned the flame of his desire to see the world. Accordingly, he turned what possessions he had into money, and, with but sixty rigsdaler (about \$90) in his pocket, took ship for Amsterdam. Although he must have spent nearly a year in the Netherlands, he tells us nothing of his stay there except a few humorous anecdotes to illustrate his poverty. On his return to Norway, he settled in Christiansand, where an acquaintance of his,

named Christian Brix, introduced him to the leading people of the place. He spent the following winter (1705-06) in teaching French, English, and Dutch. Then, for the only time in his life, he seems to have enjoyed the companionship of young women of his own age.\* The next spring he went to England, where he spent over two years, partly in Oxford and partly in London, steeping himself in new thought.

From England Holberg sailed to Copenhagen, where he soon obtained a position as travelling companion to a boy of a prominent Danish family. He took his young ward to Dresden, established him there, and then journeyed alone to Leipzig, at that time the undisputed intellectual centre of Germany. From there he went to Halle, intent on seeing the philosopher Thomasius. Though the latter, he says, would talk of nothing but the weather, the two must have had many interests in common even at that time, for Thomasius's influence upon Holberg's early work was greater than that of any other man.

Soon after Holberg's return from this his third journey abroad, in the spring of 1709, he obtained a small stipend in a foundation for students called Borch's College. While living there, in 1711, he published his first bit of historical writing, *An Introduction to European History*. He says that he collected

the materials for this work in the Bodleian, although he makes haste to add that his book is little more than a transcription of Puffendorf's similar treatise.\* In 1713, he published the first volume of an *Appendix to Universal History*, which he planned to be a complete description of all the governments in the civilized world, as they existed in his time. The work was to consist of five volumes, but only the first was printed, because in 1714 the young author was appointed an "extraordinary" professor in the University of Copenhagen.

This appointment, he says, was the king's recognition of a history of the reigns of Christian IV and Frederik III (*An Introduction to the History of Denmark in Previous Centuries*), which Holberg had sent him in manuscript. In spite of Holberg's diligent work in historical scholarship during the five years that he was a member of Borch's College, he was accused of indolence, largely because he neglected the usual scholastic disputations and declamations.† In academic circles it was declared scandalous that a man apparently ignorant of the methods of scholastic logic and *philosophia instrumentalis* should have received a university appointment. "But," declares the defendant, "the fact remains that I am a professor; and those who have other standards than the nonsensical jargon of the schoolmen by which to measure literary qualifications,

have thought me capable of discharging effectively the duties of my office.'"

Holberg's position as extraordinary professor merely gave him the right to the first vacancy that might occur in the faculty. It did not in itself entitle him to a salary. But through the good offices of a privy councillor, Ivar Rosencrantz, he was granted a special stipend of one hundred rigsdaler (\$150) a year for four years, during which time he was to become what we should call a travelling fellow of the university. In the spring of 1714, therefore, Holberg left Copenhagen for his fourth journey abroad. He was at this time thirty years old and a man of no little reputation as an historian. He went first to Amsterdam, then to Rotterdam, Antwerp, and Brussels. At Brussels, however, he became so much alarmed at the amount of his travelling expenses that he decided to walk the rest of the way to Paris.

He arrived in Paris some time in the late autumn, and stayed there almost a year. What his serious occupations and vital interests were during this inevitably important winter, we can only guess. Indeed, our one source of information about all of Holberg's early life is the whimsical first Autobiographical Epistle, in which, as we shall see presently, his object was to tell what was amusing rather than what was significant. We know, however, that he took lodgings first in the Faubourg St. Germain,

where he lived in what he calls "philosophical seclusion." He knew no one but his landlord, so that he thirsted like a Tantalus for society. Under such circumstances he must have spent some time at the theatres, about which he says nothing; and much time in the libraries, about which he tells us next to nothing.\* After several months in Paris, he moved into a part of the city much frequented by Irish Catholics. His knowledge of England gave him a natural acquaintance with them; which helped to keep fresh the interest in English literature that he had already gained.

Early in August, Holberg left Paris for Rome. Travelling partly by boat and partly on foot, he made his way slowly to Marseilles, where he took ship for Genoa. On board ship he contracted a malarial fever, which increased in severity until it threatened his life. In Genoa he lodged at a wretched inn, where he stayed two or three weeks, extremely ill, and completely at the mercy of a venal innkeeper. Evidently he can have seen but little of the city; yet the judgement he passes on its residents is interesting, if only because it betrays the author's high admiration for English gentlemen. "The common people of Genoa," he says, "are faithless and mendacious to an almost incredible degree, but the patriicians are probably as free from all vulgar vices as the English nobility."

After a few weeks, Holberg's fever subsided enough to allow him to continue his journey to Rome. He went by sea, and had the excitement of a threatened attack by Algerian pirates. His fever continued to harass him during the six months he lived in Rome, so that his account of his stay there is meagre and unimportant. He was able, however, to learn something about Italian comedy. He says that at Christmas time Rome was filled with companies of comedians and pantomimists. One of these troupes of actors happened to be quartered in his hotel, and he not only became acquainted with them, but also saw them present their one play, a kind of variant, he says, of Molière's *Le Médecin malgré lui*. Thus we have positive evidence of Holberg's early acquaintance with the *commedia dell' arte* in its native and most popular form. He may besides have seen other plays given by other companies.

About the end of February, 1716, Holberg determined to escape the perils of a sea-journey by returning to Paris overland. He walked from Rome to Florence in fourteen days, and, finding that the constant exercise improved his health, he continued on foot over the Alps and through Savoy and Dauphiné, until he reached Lyons. Thence he intended to proceed by boat, but after he had bought his ticket, a group of fellow travellers induced him to join them in an evening of revelry. Holberg was so drunk when



he left these chance companions that the next morning he could not take the boat. He had no money to buy a second ticket, and was forced to walk to Paris, where he spent a month in a vain effort to get rid of his fever. The vexatious malaria did not leave him until he reached Amsterdam, on his way back to Copenhagen, in the early autumn of 1716.

His two years abroad must have been filled with new and vivid impressions of books, plays, manners, and men; yet in his capricious chronicle he gives but the barest hints of the importance of these years in broadening his outlook upon life, and in establishing his cosmopolitan point of view.

Another fact regarding Holberg's journey may be mentioned here. Oliver Goldsmith's tramp through Europe, which lasted from February, 1755, to February, 1756, was probably suggested by his hearing of Holberg's similar undertaking. Goldsmith went to Leyden in April, 1754, only three months after the death of Holberg, about whom there was at this time much talk in Holland. The meagre information about the Danish dramatist which Goldsmith gives in his *Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759) is just the sort that he would have obtained in chance conversations. "Polite learning in Denmark," he asserts, "rose and fell with the late famous Baron Holberg," and the whole paragraph on Denmark is devoted to him; but more than half of

it concerns his prolonged tramp. "Without money, recommendations or friends," says Goldsmith, "he undertook to set out on his travels and made the tour of Europe on foot. A good voice and a trifling skill in music were the only finances he had to support an undertaking so extensive; so he travelled by day, and at night sung at the doors of peasants' houses to get himself a lodging. In this manner, while yet very young, Holberg passed through France, Germany, and Holland; and, coming over to England, took up his residence for two years in the University of Oxford. Here he subsisted by teaching French and music, and wrote his *Universal History*, his earliest but worst performance." Goldsmith then sketches vaguely in a few sentences the literary and material success of Holberg's later life.

This account is particularly interesting for the erroneous statements about Holberg that it contains, because through them we can see how completely Goldsmith had come to regard Holberg's journey as a pattern and prototype of his own. Holberg, for example, did not sing and play at the doors of peasants' houses to get himself a lodging at night, but Goldsmith did. If information similar to what we find in his *Inquiry* had come to Goldsmith in 1754-55, when he was in Leyden, nothing further would have been needed to send the unpractical and impressionable young Irishman off on his year of

vagrancy. Goldsmith's journey seems to be the sole direct influence of Holberg on any English man of letters, and it is not strictly literary. Still, an inspiration that led to the composition of the *Traveller*, and produced circumstances that helped to free its author from insularity in his critical attitude, deserves an important place in Goldsmith's biography.

Superficially considered, Holberg's life up to this time seems almost aimless. He appears to have become confirmed in habits of improvident travel. He apparently wandered whither his caprice directed. Yet none of his movements during these early years was thoughtlessly or carelessly made. They were all intended to satisfy his insatiable intellectual curiosity. He went abroad to read in foreign libraries and to study with foreign scholars; he stayed abroad to observe life in all its phases and to reflect upon what he saw. Without these experiences Holberg might possibly have become the able scholar and historian that he later was; he could scarcely have developed the brilliant talent for satire which he devoted to ridiculing the provincial manners of Denmark.

## II

The two years that Holberg had spent abroad had brought no vacancy in the faculty of the university. Though now thirty-two, he was still compelled to

live on his miserable stipend and wait as patiently as he could for the death of some professor. Yet poverty did not destroy his zeal for scholarship. He continued his historical studies, and published before the end of a year an *Introduction to International Law*, a work composed according to the theories of Grotius and Puffendorf, who, together with Thomasius, were his avowed models.

In December, 1717, Holberg succeeded Johan Frederik Wandalin as Professor of Metaphysics in the university. Fate could hardly have been more playful. One who all his life was to be an untiring opponent of the pedantry of mediaeval logic was forced to begin his career as a professor by teaching the very subject which was most dominated by formalism. Holberg saw the humour of the situation, and the ceremonious laudation of metaphysics which tradition required him to give at his induction into office was marked by sententious irony. His address so shocked and angered his colleagues that they immediately became antagonistic to him, and were more than ready, when they saw themselves ridiculed later in satires like *Peder Paars*, to oppose him openly. For the moment, however, their potential hostility interfered little with his rapid advancement. In 1719 he became Professor of Latin, and in the following year a member of the University Council.

Holberg now occupied himself with undertakings more exciting than historical research and academic lectures. It is no mere chance that his work in pure literature began at this particular time. The death of Charles XII of Sweden, in 1718, had brought to all Denmark a deep feeling of relief. The country had emerged victorious from a war that had lasted ten years, and, led by King Frederik IV, was eager to express some of its new self-consciousness. Holberg merely obeyed a national impulse, though in his own peculiar way, when he began to write the vigorous, almost insolent, satires that immediately involved him in the first of those disputes which, in one form or another, engrossed him during the following eight years.

The immediate cause of Holberg's first satire was a short history of Denmark, written by Andreas Høyer,\* a young scholar from Slesvig. This work, although intended as a text-book for Danish students, was written in German and contained much to irritate a loyal Dane. But, besides patriotic indignation, Holberg felt personal resentment, because the author in his preface had spoken contemptuously of all previous Danish historians. Holberg cast his defence in the form of an academic Latin dissertation, which he pretended had been written by a well-known character in the university, a sixty-year-old student, Poul Rytter, noted for his incorrigi-

ble drunkenness. The satire attributed to this good-for-nothing is suitably coarse; yet now and then it shows flashes of that sly, mordant humour for which Holberg later became famous. He evidently found the composition of this pamphlet congenial employment. No sooner was it finished than he attacked another work of Høyer with the same controversial ardour. Under a new pseudonym, Olaus Petri Norvegus, he ridiculed a Latin dissertation in which Høyer had tried to show that marriage between parents and children was not contrary to the laws of God or nature. Neither of these works has much literary value, yet both are important to remember, because they made a dangerous enemy of Høyer, and also showed Holberg the nature of his distinctive literary power.

In the autumn of 1719, Holberg published, under the pseudonym Hans Mikkelsen, the first book of a mock-heroic poem which describes the adventures of a certain Peder Paars and his company, who are shipwrecked on the little island of Anholt, so-called, says the author, "because it *holds on* to ships." In form *Peder Paars* is a parody on the classical epic, particularly the *Aeneid*; but this conventional form is simply the vehicle for bitter satire on Danish life as Holberg knew it. The unmistakable popular delight with which the poem was received by no means drowned the storm of protest

that arose. The clergy saw themselves satirized in the ignorant, cheating priest of Anholt; the government officers in the grasping, equally ignorant bailiff; and the professors at the university, with most reason, in the pedants who disputed angrily over the exact position of the wound which Venus received in the Trojan war. Among the many who were enraged, Professor Hans Gram and Frederik Rostgaard prepared to defend themselves with greatest zeal. Gram, an exceptionally brilliant historical investigator, took up the cudgels for the dignity of his profession. Rostgaard, one of the most influential of Holberg's contemporaries, fought for his own honour. He had travelled and studied much abroad, had married the half-sister of Anna Sophia Reventlow, later the queen of Frederik IV, and had recently been made Keeper of the Privy Seal. He owned Anholt, where Holberg had represented people as living in the deepest ignorance and depravity, and felt, therefore, that the satire was a serious reflection on himself. Gram and Rostgaard joined in writing a vigorous protest against the work and sent it to the king. The satire deserved to be condemned, they said, first, because it contained a libellous description of the excellent inhabitants of Anholt; and, secondly, because it contained "unseemly and very derisive expressions directed against the Royal University, the Rector Magnificus, the

Bishop, and the professors, and, what is much more serious, against our Christian religion and God's Holy Word." For these reasons, they begged that the book be burned by the common hangman, and that the anonymous author, whom they probably knew to be Holberg, be sought out and fittingly punished. The complaint was referred to the king's council, which had the good sense to decide that the publication was not an affair of enough public importance to justify royal interference. The king promptly approved the verdict. He, as well as his councillors, had a saving sense of humour.

This decision, and Holberg's immediate elevation to the position of Professor of Eloquence, evidently gave him new boldness, and established his independence, for he immediately brought out the second and third books of his satire. Before the end of the year, he added a fourth book and published a complete edition of the poem. The success of the finished satire was instantaneous and remarkable. Holberg states, with pardonable pride, that within a year and a half three editions were exhausted. No previous book in the Danish language had ever attained like popularity. This, of course, increased the bitterness of adverse critics, who became so vehement that, before the end of 1719, Holberg thought best to defend himself in two documents. The first was a dialogue in verse, called *A Criticism*



of "*Paars*;" the second, a prose criticism, called *Just Justesen's Idea of Peder Paars's History*. The latter is full of sly, good-natured satire, quite unlike the bludgeoning humour of *Peder Paars*. "Why!" the writer says in effect, "the author of this poem, for the very purpose of freeing his work from any suspicion of personal satire, chose for the scene of his action the obscure and remote island of Anholt; and for the time the beginning of the previous century. Among various disagreeable inhabitants of that island, he described an ignorant and covetous priest. Now I ask every sensible man if an author who describes a wicked and ignorant priest of Anholt of more than a hundred years ago can with fairness be accused of impiety. Are not those who accuse the author really more to be blamed than he?"

When the controversy over *Peder Paars* had somewhat subsided, Holberg published five more satires on miscellaneous subjects. The first was printed separately and anonymously, but in 1722 all five appeared together under the following title: *Hans Mikkelsen's Four Satires, with Two Prefaces; together with Zille Hansen's Defence of the Female Sex*. The first satire, an imitation of Boileau's eighth, reveals the author musing whether he ought to laugh or cry over the world and man's life in it. He answers, of course, that laughter is more philosophical and more amusing than weeping. The sec-

ond dwells on the contradictions which exist in every man's character. It emphasizes the fact that the singer Tigellius, whom Horace ridicules for his fickleness of mind, is just like everyone else in the world. The third satire is a defence of *Peder Paars*, practically identical with that in the criticism published two years before. The fourth, in which "the poet advises his old friend Jens Larsen not to marry," is an imitation and special application of the sixth satire of Juvenal. The fifth, in defence of women, purports to be written by a certain Zille Hansen,\* and contains a serious assertion that women are excluded from educational advantages and from the rights of citizenship, including the right to vote, not by any law of nature, but by the arbitrary prescription of man.

Holberg declares that these successful satires made him very unpopular in certain circles. His fellow professors, he says, became hostile to him, and many individual citizens regarded with dread and aversion one who could attack with such bitterness the follies and vices of mankind. Wearied, apparently, of a sort of writing which brought him only hatred, he returned with relief to his historical studies. At first he spent much time on *A Description of Denmark and Norway*, a large volume, which was not to be published until 1729. He also prepared a second edition of his *European History* of 1711, in

which he brought the narrative down to 1720. Meanwhile, conditions in Copenhagen were making for the establishment of that Danish theatre to which Holberg was to be the greatest contributor.

The establishment of Danish drama in Copenhagen was the result of a chance coöperation of three very different men, René Montaignu, Étienne Capiion, and Ludvig Holberg. Montaignu had been summoned from France as early as 1704, to serve as manager for a company of actors which was presenting French plays at the court of Frederik IV. This company continued to play at the Danish court until the plague broke out in Copenhagen in 1710. Its repertory consisted principally of comedies by Molière, Dancourt, and Legrand; of farces from Gherardi's *Théâtre Italien*; and of certain tragedies of Corneille and Racine. The plague put an end to all dramatic performances, but in 1715 the company began a second engagement, which did not terminate until September, 1721, when the king made a contract with Reinhard Kayser, the director and composer of a German opera company in Hamburg, according to which he was to pay him six thousand rigsdaler a year for the support of his company. He could hardly afford more than this sum for royal amusements, so that he dismissed all his French actors except Montaignu, whose pension he continued. Étienne Capiion, who was to be Mon-

taigu's fellow promoter, had come to Copenhagen many years before as a member of a French troupe. The company had gone to pieces, and since 1703 Capion had been a wine merchant in the Danish capital. The failure of Montaigu's venture gave Capion what seemed a rare opportunity to establish a successful theatrical company of his own. He obtained a royal patent giving him the sole right to produce comedy in Copenhagen, and on January 20, 1722, opened a theatre for the production of French comedies. "In the meantime," writes Holberg, "it had occurred to certain men, in emulation of other nations, to encourage the establishment of native drama in Denmark." Of these by far the most influential was Frederik Rostgaard. He had, to be sure, inveighed rather stupidly against *Peder Paars*, but he was a genuinely cultivated man, eager to enlarge the intellectual life of his country. René Montaigu seemed to him the one person likely to organize with success a company of Danish actors; and, through Rostgaard's influence, Montaigu, by royal patent, was given permission to bring out plays in Danish, provided they were produced under the patent already granted to Capion. In compliance with this requirement, Capion and Montaigu joined forces.

The really important task which confronted the promoters of the enterprise was to find an author

who could furnish the company with original Danish plays. No theatre can thrive on translations exclusively, and Denmark at this time had absolutely no drama in the vernacular which would have interested an eighteenth-century audience. Danish miracle-plays and mysteries and Latin school dramas of course existed ; but they were all obviously unavailable. Rostgaard, although he had been a bitter opponent of *Peder Paars*, was broad-minded and keen enough to see that the author of that work had not only created the spirit, but also had discovered the subject-matter of native comedy. He therefore suggested that Holberg should write for the newly organized company. Holberg responded with apparent enthusiasm. Indeed, he wrote comedies so rapidly and with so much zest during the next few years that we are tempted to believe that he may have composed at least a rough draft of some of them before. In one of the prefaces to his satires, published in 1722, he had compared his *Peder Paars*, in the nature of its ridicule, to the comedies of Molière and Ben Jonson. In the second preface to the same collection he declared that he saw in the faults of mankind much material from which fine comedies might be made. As soon as Holberg observed the dramatic possibilities in the figures and situations of his satires, he found it easy to create actual drama out of these elements. One fact, at least, is clear :

much of the material of his earlier comedies has a potential existence in *Peder Paars*. Important figures in the plays (like Per Deacon, Gert Westphaler, and Niels Corporal) appear there in person, with their most distinctive traits of character and amusing mannerisms. Other famous dramatic figures may be seen in the satire as mere sketches. Martha, the intriguing servant of the bailiff's daughter, is a perfect prototype of Pernille; and the village satirist possesses a nature and a problem which belong, only in a greater degree, to Philemon in *The Fortunate Shipwreck*. The situations and comic devices, no less than the characters of *Peder Paars*, recur in the comedies. For example, the famous "Collegium Politicum" of *The Political Tinker* in fully developed form, even to the interruption of the shrewish wife, is a part of the earlier satire. One may say without exaggeration that hundreds of such similarities exist between *Peder Paars* and the plays. It is not surprising, then, that Holberg, who had already realized the dramatic value of these characters and situations, eagerly accepted the proposal to write for the new company.

He must have found his work immensely stimulating, for, even though the burden of invention was lessened by his revamping of old material, he wrote with almost incredible swiftness. When Montaigne's company opened its theatre on August 23, 1722,

with a Danish translation of Molière's *L'Avare*, Holberg presented it with five of his best works: *The Political Tinker*, *The Fickle-minded Woman*, *Gert Westphaler*, *Jean de France*, and *Jeppe of the Hill*. During the year 1722 the company gave all of these plays, besides *L'Avare*, translations of Molière's *Don Juan* and *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and Boursault's *Ésope à la Ville*. During the next two years, Holberg continued to work indefatigably for the company. With the exception of Joachim Richard Pauli's *The Blind Man with Sight*, his were the only successful Danish comedies which the company could procure. In 1723 *The Eleventh of June* and *The Lying-in Chamber* were presented for the first time; and in 1724 *The Arabian Powder*, *Christmas Eve*, *Masquerades*, *Jacob von Tybo*, *Ulysses von Ithacia*, *The Journey to the Spring*, *Melampe*, and *Without Head or Tail*.

The first Danish company consisted of eleven members, three of whom were women. All the men, except Frederik Pilloi, the first Jean de France, were students. The most famous were Ulsøe, the first Hermann von Bremen, and Henrik Wegner, after whom Holberg named his famous roguish servant. The employment of students was a constant source of friction between Holberg and the other members of the University Council, a court which undertook to try those students who became actors. The case

of Jens Høberg, which occupied the Council from March to June, 1723, was typical. Although he held a scholarship in Walkendorf College, he had become a member of the new company. After months of deliberation, the Council warned him that he must give up the stage if he expected to keep his scholarship, and only by an appeal to the king was he able to have the decision reversed. This discussion in the Council widened the breach between Holberg and his colleagues. They looked upon him as more than any other responsible for perversion of the youth of the university and for destruction of collegiate discipline. Plots were probably already being formed to deprive him of his academic dignities, but not for two years did they seriously threaten his position.

Meanwhile, he began to publish his comedies. In the summer of 1723 appeared the first volume of Hans Mikkelsen's *Danish Theatre*. To this volume was prefaced *Just Justesen's Reflections upon Comedy*, an essay in which Holberg defends the part he had taken in building up the new Danish theatre. From the nature of the defence, we can easily see what charges were being persistently made against him. He answers with a vigorous affirmative the following questions: "Is it consistent with the position and character of scholars to write comedies?" and "Is it becoming and proper for the children of respectable people to take part in theatrical per-



formances?" In March, 1724, the second volume of Holberg's *Theatre* appeared, and a year later the third volume. These three volumes include all the plays he had written up to that time, except *The Busy Man*, *Erasmus Montanus*, *Witchcraft*, and *Don Ranudo*.

Besides the enmities which Holberg had aroused at the university during these years, he quite gratuitously gained the hatred of Christian Lassen Tychonius, a priest in Viborg, who, in spite of a great reputation for learning, was really a complete pedant. We should expect him, therefore, to have been fair game for Holberg's ridicule, but for the boldness and directness of it we are by no means prepared. The stupid pedant who now appears as Stygotius in *Jacob von Tybo*, Holberg originally called Tychonius. The priest was indignant at this public insult, and immediately protested to the king. Holberg ridiculed his protest in a poem, *The Jutland Feud*. Tychonius's anger was not of the sort, however, to be appeased by ridicule. In Møinchen, Deikmann, and Hans Gram, the priest had friends at court, through whom he evidently tried to take vengeance. At any rate, an investigation of university affairs which they undertook soon after seemed partially directed against Holberg.

These three, together with Andreas Høyer, in 1725, devised a plan for the ostensible purpose of

increasing the efficiency of the university. Bishop Deikmann, his son-in-law Chancellor Rasch, Lintrup the king's chaplain, and Andreas Høyer were to be the members of a commission,\* which was to be given very comprehensive powers. It was to ascertain, amongst other things, whether professors did their express duty by holding both public and private disputations, and whether professors were qualified to teach their subjects. If the commission discovered that any one of the young professors had not properly established himself by a disputation, or by some other proof of his academic fitness, it was to compel such a delinquent to comply with that excellent rule at once. Finally, if it discovered among the professors any man practically incapacitated through sickness, multiplicity of offices, or native inefficiency, it was to recommend his removal. The commission intended to present this plan to Queen Anna Sophia for her approval, along with a letter of recommendation written by Møinchen on February 28, 1725.

If Holberg had known of this scheme, he might reasonably have felt that it was a threat to his academic position. The members of the commission, dominated as they were by Høyer, he might have expected to be hostile to him. Moreover, he might have imagined that some of the lines of enquiry were directed particularly against him. The prejudiced

jury might have pronounced him guilty on three of the four counts. Although *Erasmus Montanus* was not yet published, in *Peder Paars* he had pointedly ridiculed the folly of academic disputations. As Professor of Rhetoric, he had been severely criticised by certain of his own students for his failure to teach Cicero in the conventional way. A young pedant named Lutken had complained to Lintrup, one of the members of the investigating commission, of Holberg's methods of teaching. "He would do us the greatest service," he writes, "if he would only keep still and not give us his wretched talk." Finally, Holberg might have been adjudged incapacitated for effective teaching, both because of his delicate health and because of his pernicious activity in writing comedies.

In June, 1725, Holberg left Copenhagen to take the baths at Aix, tired out, he says, by his dramatic labours. He could hardly have had any notion at this time of the schemes of the hostile clique, so that the journey cannot be regarded as a flight from dreaded persecution. Nor was it a *bona fide* trip in search of health and rest. Instead of going to Aix, he made directly for Paris, where he spent the greater part of the next two months. He seems to have gone there in the hope of getting some of his plays presented on the French stage. The international reputation which such performances would

give him was a natural object of desire. He himself translated two of his comedies into French, and sent one of them, *The Political Tinker*, to Riccoboni, *dit Lelio*, the director of the Italian Theatre. Riccoboni pronounced the play *tutta meravigliosa*, but gave as a reason for not presenting it the curious excuse that he feared it would be regarded as a satire on Fleury. Holberg also sought to obtain a standing as a French man of letters by cultivating critics like Montfaucon, Hardouin, and Castel; and by frequenting places like the Café des Beaux Esprits, where Lamotte presided. While he was attempting to realize these literary ambitions, he heard that enemies at home were plotting against him.\* These individuals may have been merely certain of his colleagues at the university, who naturally objected to his long absence from his work, or they may have been members of the investigating commission, whose scheme first became known to Holberg's friends in Copenhagen in the spring of 1726. Whoever they were, he thought it necessary to hurry back to meet their attacks. He arrived in Copenhagen some time in April, 1726, and then, or soon after, it seems clear, he began the composition of his extremely important first Autobiographical Epistle.

Although this letter has given rise to endless controversy, the following facts about it are undisputed. It is dated Copenhagen, December 31, 1727, and

was surely published before April 3, 1728.\* It purports to be addressed to a *vir perillustris*, who, as a short Latin statement prefaced to the book asserts, published it without the author's knowledge and consent.

These few facts have been variously interpreted until the fancy of ingenious critics has obscured the simple nature of the autobiography.† It is exactly what it seems to be, a whimsical narrative of Holberg's early life. It is not an apology for his dramatic activities, for the simple reason that there is nothing apologetic about the letter. He slighted the formative years of his travel and study abroad, not because he wished to emphasize his services to the university, but because those years did not seem of profound significance. Two hundred years after the events of his remarkable youth, we are naturally eager to know much more about them than he tells us; but Holberg wrote for his contemporaries, not for us. He had, moreover, a wholesome sense of humour, which prevented him from regarding his early life with the seriousness of a romantic poet. At the age of forty-two he naturally looked back upon his youth with amusement, and wrote of it whimsically. He slighted it, not with crafty intention, but from a natural disinclination to bore his readers with a minute account of unimportant matters.

The consensus of modern opinion on this subject

seems to be, furthermore, that Holberg's pretence that the letter was originally a private communication to a distinguished man was simply a literary device. The author, from the beginning, intended the epistle for the public, and merely pretended that it was addressed to a nobleman the better to arouse general interest. Whether Holberg's first Latin Epistle is his apology for his life or merely an entertaining narrative, whether it is addressed to some great noble or to the general public, plainly the author records in it amusing rather than significant facts. And although it is almost the only source of our information about him, it is by no means a complete statement. It must continually be corrected and extended by documentary evidence or by well-founded inference.

After Holberg's return from abroad, in 1726, the Danish company continued to present his old plays, as well as to produce each year a number of new ones from those he had given to Montaigne in 1723. Of these the most important to a historian of the theatre in Copenhagen is *The Funeral of Danish Comedy*. This drama was written to be presented on February 25, 1727, the day on which Montaigne's company expected to give its final public performance. The organization seemed hopelessly bankrupt. During the first year of its existence, it had gained nothing but the fitful and languid interest

of the public. The theatre held only about four hundred and fifty spectators, so that the troupe in the days of its greatest popularity never counted on box receipts of more than two hundred rigsdaler (about \$320). After the first year the receipts of the evening often amounted to a paltry eight rigsdaler (about \$13), and not infrequently the actors were compelled to tell the score of faithful spectators who had gathered that they could not afford to present the play for so small an audience. This lack of public interest, far from crushing Montaigu, merely made him redouble his efforts to obtain what he had always ardently desired, a royal subsidy. The time was favourable for urging the matter, because the royal palace in Copenhagen, which since 1724 had been undergoing extensive repairs, had recently been completely restored. In this renovated palace was a private theatre, in which the king would naturally wish to have theatrical performances. Montaigu was so far successful in his appeal to the king that, in February, 1728, he obtained for his company an annual royal subvention of fifteen hundred rigsdaler (about \$2400).

In the spring of 1728, therefore, the company, no longer dependent on the support of a fickle public, began to play again under the proud title of Royal Actors. The novelties which it offered during this spring were largely plays of the *commedia dell' arte*

translated from Gherardi's *Théâtre Italien*. The actors, of course, urged Holberg to write new comedies for them; but he refused, because, as he says in his autobiography, he was thoroughly tired of the controversies in which his plays continually involved him. Yet this desire for peace did not prevent either his revising some of his old comedies for new presentation, or his giving the company a few others, which he had composed before 1723. Some of these plays the company certainly intended to present in the autumn of 1728, when its first complete season under royal protection was to begin.

All the plans of Montaigu were upset, however, by the terrible fire that swept Copenhagen from October 20 to October 23. The theatre building itself was not destroyed, but the city was so impoverished that all forms of public amusement were for the moment impossible. Furthermore, the pietists, to whose doctrines the Crown Prince was a devout adherent, saw in the fire a divine punishment for the wickedness of Copenhagen; and the most obvious and impudent form of this wickedness they believed to be the drama. The king was enough influenced by the fanatics to discontinue his royal grant to the Danish comedians, and before conditions in the city were sufficiently improved to warrant his resumption of the subsidy, he died, on October 12, 1730. His successor, Christian VI, was



a confirmed pietist, so that with his accession all hope of resuming dramatic performances in Copenhagen disappeared. The members of Montaigu's company scattered, and the building was sold at auction in 1733. During the entire reign of Christian VI there were no licensed dramatic performances in the Danish capital.

Although it is customary to speak of Holberg's dramatic development as almost tragically interrupted by these events, the plain facts seem to show that before this time he was written out. Almost all of his comedies were the result of one sudden impulse to expression. Since 1723 he had composed scarcely more than three ; yet Montaigu's company had been playing almost continually five years after that time. If Holberg had felt the slightest desire to write comedies during these five years, he would more than once have found conditions in the theatre favourable for the production of his new plays. In 1728, for example, Montaigu's company, assured of the royal pension, bade fair to become a permanent national institution. Yet under these very stimulating circumstances, Holberg did nothing but revise some of his old work. There is no reason for supposing that only the ban on theatrical performances kept him from creating new and brilliant comedy.

Holberg never subsequently devoted his best intellectual effort to the composition of drama. The

plays which immortalize him were written with great rapidity within the limits of one decade, most of them, indeed, between 1721 and 1726. Obviously, he could not have composed with so great ease unless his youth of apparently aimless vagrancy had established an unusually keen and original critical attitude. When he returned to Copenhagen to stay, after spending the greater part of ten years in the intellectual centres of Europe, provincial Danish life seemed immediately ridiculous. To write comedy he had but to compose what he saw. But when the life about him became utterly familiar again, its incongruities disappeared; and, as his professional duties grew absorbing, his interests became less those of a satirist and more those of a productive scholar.

## III

In the preface to a slight satire published as early as 1726, Holberg makes the significant statement that this poem is without doubt his last work of pure literature. "For," he says facetiously, "humorous writers are like cats; both turn the exaggerated playfulness which nature gives them in their youth into an equally exaggerated gravity in later life." Like a cat, he has grown serious-minded and a little indolent, so that he no longer feels the impulse to comic writing. His next work, therefore, is

a serious study of a contemporary social problem. It is a defence of the Danish East India Company against charges of mismanagement brought by German critics. For this work he received the public thanks of the Copenhagen stock exchange. In the same year, 1728, he published new editions both of his *Introduction to European History* and of his *Principles of International Law*, after which he began to collect materials for his first important historical volume, *A Description of Denmark and Norway*. The great fire of October, 1728, destroyed his house, and with it all his valuable historical papers, but the moment he could find a new residence he set to work again with so much energy that in the following year he was able to publish the book as originally planned. The range and quality of these works, produced during the years when he might well have been writing comedy, prove that Holberg had not, as he insinuates, grown slothful, but that he had merely grown tired of being funny.

X Holberg was chosen to pronounce at the university the funeral oration over King Frederik IV. This duty was probably foisted upon him because the faculties considered it a particularly difficult one. Christian VI disapproved so strongly of much of his father's life that few men thought any one could praise the dead king openly without seeming to criticise his living successor. Holberg performed his

delicate task, however, with dignity, candour, and some eloquence. The passage in which he praises the king's attitude toward his own literary activity is of particular interest to us. "We talked," he says, "as in a free state. We joked, we satirized, we disputed with each other in jest, fearlessly, because the king never was offended at any freedom of speech or at thoughtless words." The satirist is here gratefully acknowledging in public the favours which the dead king had more than once shown him and his work.

During 1730, the year of Christian VI's accession to the throne, Holberg was made Professor of History in the university. In the ridicule and contempt which have always been heaped upon the pietistic king for his inopportune antagonism to the young Danish drama, it is often forgotten that he was an eager and enthusiastic patron of scholarship. The new professor of history quite naturally, therefore, during Christian VI's reign, devoted himself almost exclusively to historical research. In 1731, to be sure, as a sort of farewell to the stage, he published a complete edition of his twenty-five comedies, including all that he had written up to that time, with the exception of *Don Ranudo*. During the succeeding years, however, he wrote mainly historical works. From 1732 to 1735 he occupied himself with his *History of Denmark* from the earliest times

through the reign of Frederik III, a work which Holberg in later life was disposed to consider as his best. On it his present reputation as an historian undoubtedly rests. In 1733 appeared (in Latin) a *Synopsis of the History of the World and a Text-book of Geography*; in 1734, a revised edition of his *Introduction to International Law*. In 1735, a second Autobiographical Epistle and five books of Latin epigrams were published in a book called *Opuscula Latina*. This second epistle, which narrates the events of Holberg's life from 1726 to 1735, is an entirely different sort of document from the first. It contains neither apologies for his life, nor amusing but irrelevant digressions. It is a brief, straightforward narrative of facts, written by a man palpably satisfied with his secure position in the world.

In 1737, Holberg became treasurer of the university, — a curious metamorphosis, he himself admits, that of a philosopher into a financier. The office was well paid, and Holberg justified his acceptance of such a position by saying that after forty years of scholarly labour, he thought he had a right to rest in comfort. His election to this position proves that the industrious historian and the clever author of comedy was generally recognized to have business ability and hard common sense. Holberg was neither a dreamer nor a retired scholar. As a man of affairs, no less than as a satirist, he levelled his eyes contin-

ually at his fellows ; he applied his criticism frankly to their practical occupations. For many months after his new appointment he devoted himself exclusively to his account-books. Yet, as he himself says, a taste for writing is as difficult to overcome as a taste for whiskey, so that in the end his routine work proved a positive stimulus. He wrote with the greatest eagerness and with the best results in the months when he was most occupied with auditing and paying bills. His production during the next few years continued as great as ever before. *A Description of Bergen, the Famous Norwegian Commercial City*, a short but important historical account of his native place ; two large volumes, a *General History of the Church*, and a *Comparative History of the Achievements of Various Great Heroes and Famous Men* (which, like Plutarch's *Lives*, is a collection of comparative biographies arranged in pairs) were published in consecutive years. For the last work Holberg chose chiefly Asiatic and Indian heroes, whose romantic names in themselves provoked an eager curiosity in the reading public. He compared, for example, Oran Zeb with Saladin, Montezuma with Atapaliba, Cingeskan with Tamburlaine. Many of the personages might easily have stepped from the heroic plays of John Dryden, and appealed to the same kind of romantic interest as the Englishman's dramas. The work enjoyed great popularity, not

only in Denmark, but also in Germany, Holland, and Sweden.

In 1741, Holberg published at Leipzig (probably with the idea of evading the censor in Copenhagen) the first Latin version of his *Niels Klim's Subterranean Journey*. This work, written years before, the author asserts he had never intended to publish, because he dreaded, at his age, the attacks of those morose critics—the pietists, of course—who regarded all facetious writing as an offence to God. A bookseller, however, persuaded him, against his better judgement, to sell the manuscript. Holberg realized that the work would be fiercely assailed. It is an account of a series of visits which Niels Klim pays to a number of strange nations situated within the hollow of the earth; and, like *Robinson Crusoe*, its partial prototype, contains much pointed satire directed against the customs of contemporary society.

The success of *Niels Klim* was enormous. Before a Danish translation had been made, French, Dutch, and German versions appeared; it was later translated into Swedish, and is one of the few of Holberg's works which have been put into English.\* When the Danish version was published, in 1742, it was greeted with the disapproval which Holberg had expected. It was roundly attacked, and its tendency misrepresented; but Holberg, whose position

at the university was then secure, was not for the moment drawn into the controversy. He defended the work, however, in his third Autobiographical Epistle, written in 1743, where he asserts bitterly that he will never be persuaded to attempt satirical writing again. Holberg at sixty was not only more eager for peace than at thirty-five, when he wrote *Peder Paars*, but he had come to realize the futility of any attempt to introduce the urbane humanism of the eighteenth century into Denmark,—at least so long as a religious bigot occupied the Danish throne.

Holberg clearly indicated in another way his despair of gaining a hearing for his satires at home. In this year, 1746, he managed to have twenty-six of his comedies translated into French by one G. Fursmann, who lived in Copenhagen. Five of them, thus put into French, were printed in a volume called *Le Théâtre Danois par Mr. Louis Holberg*. To this volume Holberg contributed a preface, in which he asserts vigorously the superiority of Molière's plays and of his own to those sentimental comedies then in favour both in France and in Denmark. It was hardly to be expected, however, that a public which had lost interest in Molière could be argued into accepting Holberg. The first volume of the *Théâtre Danois*, in fact, sold so poorly that no second one was printed.



After this disappointing literary venture, Holberg turned back to historical writing with a kind of grim determination. Having nothing under way, he chose, rather arbitrarily, to compose a history of the Jews from the earliest times to the eighteenth century. The work, undertaken and carried out as an illustration of that spirit of religious tolerance for which he persistently pleaded, was published in two large quarto volumes under the title of *The History of the Jewish People*. In 1743, he published a second volume of *Opuscula Latina*, a new collection of Latin epigrams, and his third Autobiographical Epistle. Besides the straightforward narrative of his life, the last document contains an essay, written with a little of an old man's diffuseness, about his own character, his favourite books, and the durable satisfactions of his life. In somewhat the same tone of benevolent wisdom is a collection of so-called *Moral Reflections*, which he published in the following year. These short essays are based on texts taken from his Latin epigrams, and are half-serious, half-humorous. They range in subject from a sincere plea for religious tolerance to a half-jocose warning to a young girl not to marry an officer.

In 1745, a German version of *Don Ranudo* appeared at Leipzig, and later in the same year a Danish edition at Copenhagen. The only plausible reason for Holberg's keeping this play out of print

so long is that he had never been satisfied with the form in which he had written it.\* Even the edition of 1745 was published by accident. The author's manuscript was lent to a friend, from whom it fell into the hands of a printer; and he, without asking the author's leave, printed the play. *Don Ranudo* was thus the only one of Holberg's comedies to be printed singly during his lifetime. It was, furthermore, the first to have his name upon a Danish title-page.

In the same year he published his *Comparative Histories of Various Heroines and Famous Women*, a companion piece to his *Comparative Histories of Various Heroes*. It was written to prove the justice of his belief that women are worthy both of higher education and political enfranchisement. This theory he mentions briefly in his preface, because, as he justly says, his ideas on the subject were already well known. He had set them forth at length in his *Nille Hansen's Apology for Women*, in parts of *Niels Klim*, and particularly in his introduction to the lives of Zenobia and Catherine Alexiwna, which he had already included in his *Histories of Heroes*.

#### IV

Early in August, 1746, the morose Christian VI died, and with him disappeared the obscurantist devotional life of the court. Frederik V, the twenty-three-year-old Crown Prince, who became king on

August 6, 1746, was known to be quite as intelligent and devoted a patron of art as Frederik IV had been. Almost immediately after the coronation, Carl August Thielo, the German court organist under Christian VI, applied for the privilege of giving plays in Copenhagen again. In his petition he professed a desire to present comedy "according to the plan which has been established by Ludvig Holberg in his Danish comedies, which have been formerly produced here." When, therefore, we find his patent granting him the right to proceed "according to the plan which previously our beloved Ludvig Holberg has established," we must not infer that Holberg had formulated a detailed plan for the management of the new theatre. The patent merely intended to suggest vaguely that Holberg's comedies were to be the criterion by which productions at the new theatre were to be judged.

The reorganized company contained one member of Montaigu's original troupe, Pilloi, and he undertook the instruction of new actors. Holberg, although he seems to have agreed to advise the company about its repertory,\* had no official connection with it. On May 3, 1747,† the company began to play in a small building called Berg's House, in Laedergade. The drama was Holberg's *Political Tinker*. Of the fifty performances given in this little theatre, by far the greater number were pre-

sentations of Holberg's comedies. Besides all the old favourites, the company produced three completely new plays, *Honourable Ambition*, *Erasmus Montanus*, and *Invisible Ladies*. In the latter part of the year, the king gave the company a piece of land very near the site of the present Royal Theatre on Kongens Nytorv. A building called the Tar House, then standing on the land, was used as the company's theatre from December, 1747, until the following June. As soon as the company received recognition and support from the government, its direction was put into the hands of a committee, composed of Pilloi the actor, a royal councillor, and two prosperous merchants. Strangely enough, Holberg was not made a member of the board of directors. If his connection with the company had been as close as many of his biographers assert, he would undoubtedly have been chosen to that office. So long as the company occupied the Tar House, it continued to give Holberg's plays the most prominent place in its repertory. Yet it played scarcely fewer of the translations of Molière and Regnard.

Early in the year 1748, Julius von Quoten, an enterprising manager, set up a rival theatre in Stor Kongensgade. He started with a novel and ambitious plan, proposing to give four performances each week, two in German and two in Danish, and to bring out many new plays. But he found the public

had so strong a preference for Holberg's works that he was compelled, not only to give these frequently in Danish, but also to present them on his German days in Detharding's translations. Von Quoten's enterprise, in spite of his willingness to humour the taste of the public, was short-lived. In May, 1748, he rented his building to the Royal Actors, who used it as a temporary theatre while their new structure on Kongens Nytorv was being built. The Royal Actors at this time played Holberg less and less. Translations of Molière, Regnard, and Destouches enjoyed for the moment a much greater popularity. Of the forty pieces given in Berg's House from June to December, only four were by Holberg.

On December 18, 1748, the new theatre was dedicated with appropriate ceremony. Plays were of course given, but none of Holberg's. Besides a prologue composed especially for the occasion, the bill was made up of Regnard's *Le Joueur* and La-font's *Trois Frères Rivaux*. The management doubtless thought that because these plays were written in verse in the original, they suited better the dignity of the occasion. Holberg must have felt some chagrin in seeing the National Theatre, which he had done more than any one else to create, dedicated without so much as a mention of his comedies. He believed, with some justice, that the first board of directors disliked his work, and he criticised again

and again their selection of plays, and particularly their ruining the taste of the public with repeated productions of Destouches. Holberg's own taste in drama seems to have been distinctly limited. By drama he really meant comedy, and comedy of but one sort. Tragedy seemed to him affected and bombastic. He thought that romantic plays were written more for the eye than for the ear, and were irregular in form and trifling in substance; that pointless physical farce and horse-play ought to disgust all sensible men; and that comedies of mere dialogue, like those of Destouches, did not possess enough action to illustrate and establish dramatic characters. Besides his own comedies, he seems to have liked few save those of Molière and one or two of Regnard.

After January, 1750, two vacancies on the board of directors were filled by men with whom Holberg soon grew to be on the best of terms. In the spring of 1751, under their direction, Holberg's new play, *Plutus*, was produced. According to the author, it was received with great enthusiasm by both young and old, who agreed in pronouncing it one of his best works. Its success stimulated Holberg again to eager and rapid composition. In the latter part of 1750, he wrote *Sganarelle's Journey to the Philosophical Land*, *The Ghost in the House*, *A Philosopher in his Own Estimation*, and *The Republic*. The first of these plays was produced in the Royal Theatre

on December 1, 1751, and the second on November 3, 1752. The production of *The Ghost in the House*, in which there were no women, led certain of the author's friends to ask him to write a companion piece, in which no men should appear. His reply was *The Bridegroom's Metamorphosis*, a comedy intended as an after-piece to *The Ghost in the House*. The play was never presented in this way. In fact, it was not acted at all until the year 1883. *A Philosopher in his Own Estimation* and *The Republic* were played first in 1754, shortly after Holberg's death. During the years immediately preceding, *Witchcraft*, *Don Ranudo*, and *The Fortunate Shipwreck* were given their first production.

In the six comedies of Holberg's old age we miss that spirited criticism of his contemporaries which is the life of his earlier work. He has become consciously and often heavily moral. He seems to be purposely running counter to the French taste of the time, which, imported into Copenhagen, made audiences there delight above all in Destouches. The plays, moreover, are either imitative or the result of indirect observation of life. *The Ghost in the House* is little but a translation from Plautus; *Sganarelle's Journey* is a dramatic treatment of a part of *Niels Klim*; and *The Republic* is a satire on project-makers, whom he had already much more humorously ridiculed in *The Political Tinker*. In-

teresting as these comedies may be as evidence of the dramatist's intellectual interests in later life, they are of little importance as works of art.

The last years of Holberg's life were spent in peace and affluence. Since 1740 he had owned a country estate at Tersløsegaard. From that date until his death he spent his summers in the stately house which has recently been made into a national museum. There he did all in his power to make the lot of his own peasants as different as possible from that of his famous character, poor Jeppe of the Hill. Holberg, who had always thought his plays of value chiefly because they were "moral comedies," considered his life as of most value when he was performing unselfishly the duties of a good citizen.

The disposition which he made of his money in his will showed his eagerness to continue to be a benefit to society even after his death. Having never married, and being without heirs, he had long planned to bequeath his estate to some public institution. At one time he thought of establishing a fund for the support of Danish writers; but as the reading public in Denmark grew in size and intelligence, such a legacy became less and less necessary. At another time he arranged to leave part of his estate as a dowry fund for poor "virtuous girls,"\* but no bequest for such a purpose appears in his final will. His own sense of humour evidently did not allow



him, an old bachelor, to make such a bequest. Besides, he fortunately saw a chance to devote his money to the promotion of the very thing he held most dear, the free and natural study of the Danish language and literature. Early in Christian VI's reign, a plan for reopening the Academy at Sorø, which had been closed since 1665, was proposed. The necessary buildings were erected during the reign of Christian VI, but the school still found itself without funds for running expenses. Holberg approved heartily of the project. He felt sure that this school, free from the rigid and narrowing traditions of the university, could devote itself with peculiar directness to the subjects which he believed needed cultivation. Accordingly, he willed it his estates at Brorup and Tersløsegaard, with all their appurtenances, and a considerable sum of money. By a later will, the terms of which he made public, he added all the rest of his possessions in land, and his entire library. The Crown showed its appreciation of these gifts by elevating the donor to the rank of baron on March 6, 1747.

This honour made no difference in the simple, dignified manner of Holberg's life, or in his assiduous literary activity. His last years were devoted to the composition of his *Epistles*. Like his *Moral Reflections*, these are essays on all sorts of serious subjects, theological, philosophical, and aesthetic,

occasionally frankly humorous and satirical. Four volumes of the *Epistles* were published in the year 1748-50, and a fifth volume posthumously. His last literary work of any importance was his *Moral Fables*, published in 1751, for which almost no critic has a good word. The date of the curious translation of Metastasio's *L'Artaserse* cannot be definitely determined. It was arranged as an heroic play in prose, with incidental songs and arias, but never played until January, 1757, when Holberg's prose was put into verse. The most probable time for the composition of this bit of dramatic hackwork seems to be the year 1752, when for a few months Holberg took the place of his friend Rappe as president of the directors of the theatre.

During the last years of Holberg's life, he had been troubled with an increasingly severe affection of the lungs. In August, 1753, when he returned to Copenhagen from the country, he had grown so weak that he realized he could live but little longer. His will and nervous force were so strong, however, that he survived until January 28, 1754. The Royal Theatre, which his work had created and maintained, took no official notice of his death. In those days no one would have thought a theatre a fitting place for any service of commemoration. Holberg was buried as he had lived, simply, almost unnoticed by his fellow citizens. He lies buried in the

old cathedral at Sorø, by the side of the great Bishop Absalom. And this mighty mediaeval prelate and warrior seems no unfit companion for the keen modern satirist who made the Danish *bourgeoisie* laugh at itself.



## HOLBERG'S PLAYS



## CHAPTER II

### HOLBERG'S PLAYS

OF all the results of Holberg's varied literary activity, only his comedies have retained an important place in Danish literature, and they alone will be considered in this study. These plays, with but few exceptions, were composed between the years 1722 and 1728, during the time in which the Danish theatre was making its first struggle for existence. They were nearly all the fruit of the same dramatic impulse. Holberg's art sprang full-grown from the brain of a ripened scholar and very shrewd observer of the world. It shows no gradual logical development. During the reign of Christian VI it seems to have lapsed completely, so that the six comedies which Holberg wrote after 1746 are, in most respects, quite unlike his earlier ones. They are either adaptations of comedies of classical antiquity, or rigidly moral works, in which the author's invention falters and his wit fails. We are unable, therefore, to trace from play to play the gradual growth of Holberg's dramatic power. We must substitute for this conventional method an analysis of a remarkable art which even at its first appearance seems to have been mature.

Holberg's plays may be classified under four heads:\*

I. *Domestic Comedies of Character*, which hold up to ridicule the foibles of some one central figure, as they are revealed in his relations with a well-organized family group. Although the plots of these plays are occasionally resolved by the tricks of a conventional servant or even by an elaborate intrigue, the dramatic interest is always focused upon the central character and the situations in which his foibles involve both him and his family. Here may be grouped: ✓ *The Political Tinker*, ✓ *Jean de France*, ✓ *The Busy Man*, ✓ *Jeppe of the Hill*, ✓ *The Lying-in Chamber*, ✓ *Honourable Ambition*, ✓ *The Fortunate Shipwreck*, ✓ *Erasmus Montanus*, ✓ *Don Ramudo di Colibrados*, ✓ *Pernille's Short Experience as a Lady*, and ✓ *The Bridegroom's Metamorphosis*.

II. *Simple Comedies of Character*, in which the dramatic milieu is not the family in any organized sense. The emphasis in these plays is laid, however, no less clearly than in those of the first type, on the exhibition of some ridiculous foible of one central character. Here may be grouped: *The Fickle-minded Woman*, *Without Head or Tail*, *Master Gert Westphaler*, *Invisible Ladies*, and *A Philosopher in His Own Estimation*.

III. *Comedies of Intrigue*, in which the interest is mainly concentrated upon a series of tricks, usually devised and managed by roguish servants, who bring about bewildering confusions of identity



through their numerous elaborate disguises. Holberg's comedies of this sort differ from his simple comedies of character only in dramatic emphasis. The butt of all the tricks is, of course, a figure of some individuality; yet the emphasis is laid, not upon the display and progress of his characteristic foible, but rather upon the humour of trickery, for which alone he exists. Here may be grouped: *The Eleventh of June*, *Masquerades*, *Henrich and Pernille*, *Arabian Powder*, *The Journey to the Spring*, *Jacob von Tybo*, *Christmas Eve*, *The Peasant Boy in Pawn*, *Diderich*, *Terror of Mankind*, and *A Ghost in the House*.

IV. *Comedies of Manners: Melampe, Ulysses von Ithacia, Witchcraft, Plutus, The Republic*, and *Sganarelle's Journey to the Philosophical Land*. No two of these plays are at all alike, but each one satirizes some social or political folly which is not treated as the particular foible of an individual.

The plays included in the first of the four classes comprise Holberg's most original and effective work. In them appear, almost without exception, those figures familiar to every Danish schoolboy. The dramatic method which the author employs seems entirely adequate for his purpose. Although no single comedy can illustrate satisfactorily all Holberg's virtues of method, the plot of *Erasmus Montanus*

may be regarded as fairly representative of his best technique.

In the first scene of this play we are introduced into the home of a typical Danish peasant, Jeppe Berg. He is attempting to read a letter from his son Rasmus, a student at the University of Copenhagen. In accordance with the academic pedantry of the time, the young man has transformed his name Rasmus Berg into the more dignified Erasmus Montanus; and he has further shown his proper respect for the language of learning by filling his letter so full of Latin that his poor father can make nothing of it. Jeppe is compelled, therefore, to enlist the aid of the one supposedly learned man of the countryside, Peter, the fat and bleary-eyed deacon. His translations, although satisfactory to Jeppe and his eager wife Nille, are far from accurate. *Logica* he translates by "pulpit," *rhetorica* by "ritual;" and because he has never seen the word *metaphysica*, he is quite sure that it must be French. He hastens to explain to Jeppe that Latin has changed radically since his day, and proves his mastery of old-fashioned Latin by reciting vocabularies remembered from his *First Latin Book*. Flushed by the review of his own learning, he boldly offers to meet Erasmus in a contest either in singing or in academic disputation. This spirited conversation is interrupted by the entrance of Lisbed, Rasmus's betrothed. She has come

with her father and mother to find out when her lover will reach home. The girl shows an inane and not very maidenly longing for her sweetheart, and is harshly rebuked by her father for the unseemly display of her elemental love. She pays little attention to the scolding, because at this moment Rasmus's younger brother Jacob enters with the exciting news that the scholar has already arrived. Moreover, he has heard conclusive proofs of his brother's magnificent erudition. The driver of Rasmus's cart on the way home has told that the scholar lay prone upon the floor of the wagon during the entire journey, disputing incessantly with himself; and that at least twice, while gazing at the moon, deep in philosophic speculation, he fell out of the wagon, and so nearly broke his neck — from sheer learning! With this announcement, the first act closes.

The principal character has not appeared, though from the very opening of the play he has been the centre of interest. Each of the minor characters, nevertheless, has become a distinct and striking individual. The first act, therefore, besides arousing a keen interest in this important figure, has created a very real domestic *milieu* in which he is to display himself.

At the beginning of the second act, Erasmus himself enters, with his stockings falling down over the calves of his legs, and presenting in general a

farcically exaggerated picture of learned preoccupation. He immediately bewails the lack of those academic disputes which have become his sole delight. The first member of the family to greet the homesick scholar is his young brother Jacob. Erasmus, horrified at being called "brother" by this mere farmer's boy, promptly orders him to call him thereafter Monsieur Montanus. He then attempts to impress Jacob still further by explaining the difficult nature of his profession.

*Montanus.* Do you know what disputation is?

*Jacob.* Of course! I dispute here every day with the girls in the house, but it does n't do me any good.

*Montanus.* Oh, yes! That kind of disputation is common enough.

*Jacob.* Well, what is it that you dispute about, Monsir?

*Montanus.* Oh, I hold disputations about important and learned things,—for example, whether angels were created before men, whether the earth is round or oval, about the sun, moon, and stars, their size and distance from the earth, and other similar matters.

*Jacob.* No, that's not the kind of thing I dispute about. Nothing of that sort makes a bit of difference to me. If I can only get folk to work, they may say for all I care that the earth is eight-cornered.

*Montanus.* O, *animal brutum!*

Finally, Jacob's crude pragmatism and his complete lack of respect for the philosopher's exalted calling so exasperate Erasmus that he flings his book at his brother's head. The uproar of this unaca-

demic disputation brings in both Jeppe and Nille. After stoutly taking Erasmus's part, they try to soothe his indignation at Jacob's ignorance by promising him that he will find a worthy fellow scholar in Peter the deacon, a man who both in his singing and in his preaching has given abundant evidence of sound learning. Erasmus contemptuously disposes of claims to erudition based on such accomplishments, and shows what real learning is by giving an exhibition of the power of his own dialectic.

*Montanus.* Little Mother, I will turn you into a stone.

*Nille.* Nonsense! Even learning can't do that.

*Montanus.* Well, you just listen! A stone cannot fly.

*Nille.* That's so, not unless it's thrown.

*Montanus.* You cannot fly.

*Nille.* That's so, too.

*Montanus.* Ergo, Little Mother is a stone. (*Nille cries.*) . . .

What are you crying about?

*Nille.* Oh, I am so afraid that I shall turn into a stone; my legs begin to feel cold already!

*Montanus.* Don't worry, Little Mother, I will turn you right back into a human being again. A stone can neither think nor talk.

*Nille.* That's so. I don't know whether it can think or not, but it surely can't talk.

*Montanus.* Little Mother can talk.

*Nille.* Yes, thank God! I talk as well as a poor peasant woman can.

*Erasmus.* Well ! Ergo, Little Mother is no stone.

*Nille.* Oh, that 's good. Now I feel like myself again. Gracious, it takes strong heads to bear study.

In these few scenes the main elements of Erasmus's nature are fully developed. His insufferable intellectual conceit, through which the undisciplined feelings of a spoiled peasant boy continually appear, is realistically drawn, with little or no exaggeration. In what follows Erasmus changes little. But as he displays the same ridiculous foible to one character after another, each reacts in his own way. He shocks his prospective father-in-law by asserting that the world is round. The old man is so horrified by this piece of atheism that he utterly refuses to let his daughter marry Erasmus, unless he makes a complete recantation, a thing which the scholar self-righteously refuses to do.

*Montanus.* I love your daughter more than my own soul, but surely you can't wish me for her sake to renounce my intellect and to give up philosophy !

*Jeronimus.* Ha, ha ! So you have another girl, have you ? You are welcome to your Lucy or Sophie ; I will not force my daughter upon you.

In the meantime, with his adoring parents and Jesper the bailiff for audience, Erasmus has had his long promised debate with Peter the deacon. The wily churchman answers Erasmus's interrogations with the only Latin he knows, grammatical

rules that he learned at school. The listeners, particularly Jesper, are enormously impressed with his glib replies; and in the pedant's exasperated demand that the argument be carried on in Danish, so that they may understand the nonsense that Peter is talking, his auditors find an admission of defeat. Nille cries in chagrin. The scene ends in a fight between Erasmus and Peter.

When the two next meet, the scholar shows his contempt for the deacon by proving him to be a cock. Jesper, who has been an outraged witness of this insult to Peter, first contradicts Erasmus's conclusion in an excited answer, which has every appearance of being categorical, and then rushes off to plan some revenge. He finds a recruiting officer, whom he immediately sets upon the scholar. The lieutenant flatters Erasmus by expressing a desire to see an exhibition of his famous logical method. He bets Erasmus that he cannot prove that it is a child's duty to beat his parents. This proposition the young pedant establishes almost automatically, merely by putting an argument of Pheidippides in Aristophanes's *Clouds* into the form of his infallible dialectic. The lieutenant acknowledges the scholar's triumph, pays him the wager, and then maintains that because Erasmus has taken the king's money, he has enlisted. The glib man of words is helpless in the hands of this masterful soldier, who drills him

with exaggerated military severity. Finally, Jeronimus hears of the plight of his prospective son-in-law, and, after making him swear that the earth is "flat as a pancake," bribes the lieutenant to free him. Erasmus thus emerges from the action of the play, cured of his intellectual pride and his insane love for disputation, ready for an ordinary marriage with Lisbed.

The method of the play is very like that employed in the rest of Holberg's comedies of character. The bourgeois family is usually composed of the same members. There is the typical middle-aged father, sensible and kindly. Though called Jeppe in this comedy, he almost always bears the name Jeronimus. Over him stands the mother, unlike Nille, the absolute ruler of the household, and able to establish her wishes there, in spite of any feeble protests that he may make. Magdelone is the conventional name of this type figure. If the child of the two old people is a daughter, her name is probably Leonora, and she is a colourless little thing who is in love with her young neighbour Leander. He is a faithful lover and nothing more. If the *amoroso* is the child of Jeronimus and Magdelone, his beloved Leonora is the daughter of some friend of Jeronimus. This second old man is often little more than a voice of common sense, like Lisbed's father in *Erasmus Montanus*. If any member of the family



becomes the figure against whom the ridicule is directed, he loses the conventional character he would possess as a mere member of the family.

The entrance of the principal figure into this comparatively normal group is usually postponed until the conversation of the family has aroused an expectant interest in him. In their expository dialogue they draw the picture of which his subsequent actions must be the enlarged, yet faithful, copy. His exhibition of the nature attributed to him is repeated two or three times for no other dramatic reason than the fun for the spectators in the exhibition itself and in the attitudes which the other characters strike before it. Only after such scenes of exposition is the intrigue contrived which precipitates the *dénouement*.

In many of Holberg's domestic comedies of character the *dénouement* is managed in a more conventional way than in *Erasmus Montanus*. To the family are added the very important servants, Pernille, Leonora's maid, and Henrich, Leander's man, Holberg's equivalents of the unnaturally clever intriguers familiar in French and Italian comedy of the time. These two usually devise a plot for the ostensible purpose of bringing together the lovers, who are separated, like Erasmus and Lisbed, as a result of the folly of the central character. The fundamental dramatic purpose of the intrigue, however, is

the creation of a situation in which the central figure may most fully display his foible. By clever manipulation of the action, the servants finally make him the dupe of his own peculiarity, and therefore ready to see it as the folly it is. If, in *Erasmus Montanus*, Lisbed had been provided with a maid Pernille, who had induced Henrich, a servant of Erasmus, to disguise himself as the recruiting officer, for the express purpose of curing the pedant of the foible which was proving fatal to his plans for marrying Lisbed; if then Henrich had assumed the disguise in the hope of winning Pernille for his wife, and if he had disciplined Erasmus into normality, then the management of the *dénouement* would have been entirely typical.

*Erasmus Montanus*, like all of Holberg's comedies, is composed of many farcical elements; yet it is by no means so completely a farce as it inevitably seems from a mere *résumé* of the plot. In spite of the exaggerated and fantastic action, the author succeeds in giving us a memorable series of *genre* pictures. But he does more than that. His realistic scenes present a situation of universal interest.\* Erasmus is the perennial young prig who has accidentally assimilated some new ideas. His stubborn adherence to them is a sign, not so much of righteous conviction, as of scornful superiority to his less intellectual fellows. Prizing his ideas not because

they are true, but because they give him caste, he displays his supreme folly in his devotion to so obvious a truth as the roundness of the world. He represents, therefore, in his own wrong-headed way, the enlightened youth of every generation; and his ideas are greeted as ignorance, prejudice, and privilege always have greeted progressive thought.

Erasmus and his ideas raise an intellectual uproar in the village. Each apostle of the old order opposes them in characteristic fashion. Jeppe and Nille have no notion that ideas can concern the hard routine of living. Such things are forms of personal peculiarity. Jeppe is firmly convinced that learned folk are always a little crazy and so must be treated with indulgence. Nille considers all book learning a form of magic. She believes that her son's syllogisms are spells that will actually turn her into stone. And when the parents realize that the formulas of Erasmus, the wizard, are to have disastrous practical effects upon the life of Erasmus, their son, they regard the former with hopeless but half-admiring terror.

The opposition of Jeronimus, the pedant's prospective father-in-law, to new ideas is in its essence quite as unintellectual as the distressed wonder of his parents. The old man considers himself, however, an intellectual leader, because he has by his own exertions raised himself to a position of wealth and importance in the village. His inherited ideas

are now a part of his irreproachable respectability. Erasmus's assault upon his fundamental notions is, therefore, an insult to his career and a threat to the stability of the entire community. As a man of affairs, he takes the practical steps necessary for reforming the young heretic. Jeronimus represents a type of restricted intellect, combined with the arrogance that attends material success, which is not wholly unknown to-day.

Jesper the bailiff regards himself as a thorough man of the world. His judgements are affected, not by any prejudices, but solely by his knowledge of life. He therefore greets Erasmus's strange notions with shouts of laughter. It is wonderful to him that the learned folk of Copenhagen can fall into such ridiculous errors. His experience as a man confutes them at every turn. He knows, for example, that if people lived on the other side of the earth with their heads down, they would speedily fall off into the abyss. How much learned men are in need of a bailiff's common sense!

Finally, there is Peter the deacon, the priest of the old faith. His position in society, his livelihood, depends on the persistence of the old notions. His learning is not sound, but it has passed for gospel in the village. Let it be shown defective in any particular, and morality and true religion will forsake the community. Yet his faith is not a conviction;

it is only a pious formula. He cannot argue with Erasmus. He can only appeal to the love which his parishioners bear him to justify his doctrine.

Against the combined attack of these philistines, Erasmus cannot triumph. He has not enough real belief himself. He holds his opinions only because they are the intellectual fashion at the university. Unable to stand out against the bigotry of tradition, he renounces with oaths his assertion that the world is round. Prejudice and superstition conquer the truth, partly because it possesses no disinterested advocate, partly from mere weight and force of numbers. For all that, there is nothing tragic or pathetic in the pedant's renunciation. He is as great a fool as any character in the play. *Erasmus Montanus* is thus a pure comedy, in which the author's humour plays freely and impartially upon all the characters, and it is because the characters absorb our interest that the play is, in spite of the farcical nature of the comic action, no mere farce. Indeed, it clearly deserves Professor Vilhelm Andersen's description, "a Danish *culture comedy* of universal significance."

In *Jeppe of the Hill*, Holberg has made a world-old farce a vehicle for realistic and profound delineation of character. Jeppe, the comic hero, is an extraordinarily complete and vivid human being. Dr. Georg Brandes says of him: "All that we should

like to know of a man when we become acquainted with him, and much more than we usually do know of the men with whom we become acquainted in real life or in the drama, we know of Jeppe. All our questions are answered.' '\* This praise is just. We know not only the conditions under which Jeppe lives, but also his shrewd opinions of men, and even the attitude with which he will meet death.

Jeppe in the first act is a wretch cowed into abject submission to everybody and everything. His wife Nille beats him; the bailiff forces him to work like a beast of burden; and the deacon quite brazenly makes him a cuckold. The morning when we first see the wretched man, his wife hales him out of bed at sunrise, and, threatening him with her whip, which she picturesquely calls Master Erich, she orders him to walk to the village five miles away, to buy her two pounds of soft soap. With an empty stomach, Jeppe stumbles out to accomplish his cheerless errand. Inevitably he goes, as he has too often gone before, directly to Jacob Shoemaker's tavern. This miserable place is his one refuge from the tyranny of his shrewish wife; and brandy his one source of happiness.

The greedy innkeeper will not trust Jeppe, and easily persuades him to spend some of his wife's soap-money for his first drink. Under the genial

influence of the brandy, his mind reverts to the one proud recollection of his life, the ten years he served in the militia. The roseate memories of his somewhat doubtful military daring make him feel so brave that he swears that if he only had his wife in his clutches at that moment, he would beat her until she cried for mercy. After Jeppe has taken his first gulp, he is utterly unable to continue his journey. Every time he attempts to start, the temptation to take just one drink more brings him back to the alluring bottle, until he has drunk up all Nille's money. Then Jacob, who has been urging him to imbibe as long as his cash lasted, realizes that Jeppe may consume more than is good for him, and with a pious exclamation of horror at such a possibility, slams the door in his face. Poor Jeppe is by this time very drunk, and, although he makes a few mechanical efforts to go on the errand that he now only vaguely remembers, he soon falls down in a complete stupor. The wretched peasant is no less a victim of the one man to whom he comes for comfort, than of Nille, the bailiff, and the deacon.

In the second act Jeppe awakes in the baron's bed, gorgeously clothed, and attended by a train of obsequious servants. Like a true peasant, he suffers no embarrassment at finding himself the apparent lord of all this grandeur. The problem of his identity does, however, perplex him; and he wrestles

with that with all the ingenuity of his native wit. Is he asleep? Is he still really Jeppe the peasant? At last he decides that the luxury about him is so much greater both in kind and degree than anything he has ever imagined, that it must be the perfect felicity of paradise. He chuckles to think how little he deserves heaven.

When he is finally convinced that he really is the baron, he begins to take his physical pleasures in great gulps. As Dr. Brandes says, "It is natural for the man who has worked like a horse to take his pleasures like a dog." So, after eating and drinking his fill, he is eager to have immediate possession of the wife of the baron's bailiff. For years he has been oppressed by a fellow of this sort. Power, therefore, means to him the opportunity to be despotic and arbitrary; and he naturally chooses his victims from the class of men that has abused him. As a constant accompaniment to all these unusual delights of power, he continues his old pleasure of drinking, though now fine wines take the place of raw brandy. His luxurious carousal ends, however, as did his wretched brandy-tippling, in a drunken sleep. Then he is stripped of his finery and cast out again upon the dung-heap. After he awakes, half believing that he has made a brief visit to heaven, he is made the victim of a series of brutal practical jokes. He is subjected to a pretended arrest, on the ground that



he has insinuated himself into the baron's castle with criminal intent, put through the forms of a mock trial, condemned to take poison, and to have his body hung up at the cross-roads. The poisonous draught, however, is a mere sleeping-potion; when he awakes later upon the gibbet, he believes that he has died.

We are grateful for all this wild horse-play, because it gives Jeppe opportunities to show his true character. In the supposed presence of death, he exhibits real dignity and courage. The man who has been desperately afraid of Nille and cowed by the bailiff and the clerk, is not afraid to die. He does weep, to be sure, when he hears his advocate plead for him; and offers him, in a kind of maudlin gratitude, a bit of his chewing tobacco. But when the lawyer refuses the gift with the lofty remark that he is defending him solely from motives of Christian charity, he quickly recovers his shrewd sense of humour. "I beg your pardon," he says with mock humility, "I didn't realize that you men were so honourable." The tenderness with which he takes leave of his daughter Martha and of his dappled horse shows for what things he has a deep affection. "Good-bye, my dappled horse," he says, "and thanks for every time that I have ridden you. Next to my own children, I have no beast that I have loved as much as you."

The illuminating exposition of Jeppe's character continues throughout the leisurely *dénouement* of the last act. When on the gibbet, in conversation with his grief-stricken wife, he adopts the generous, lofty tone that should be the expression of a disembodied spirit. But when his incorrigible thirst has once more mastered him, he assumes the domineering manner of an immortal and orders Nille to run and fetch him a crown's worth of brandy. Jeppe cannot be convinced that he is not an orthodox mixture of corpse and ghost, until he is doomed back to life again by the judge who convicted him. Then he naturally tries to maintain that his ignominious experiences have been heroic adventures. He cannot hurry to his friend the innkeeper fast enough. "Hat under your arm!" he says to the astonished Jacob. "Compared with such a man as I am now, you are but a poor dog." But after he hears the true explanation of his romantic fortunes, he silently sneaks out of the inn, back to the vicious circle of the life with which we have become perfectly acquainted.

Here a character, apparently the creature of a time-worn farcical story, is made to represent in vital human terms the results of a debasing social and economic system. In Jeppe the peasant of eighteenth-century Zealand lives immortally. Conditions in him have degraded, but not crushed, the native

power of his race. Through the ignominy of Jeppe's life we catch glimpses of an inherent shrewdness and vigour of will that have made the Danish peasant so vital a part of modern Denmark. Such a transformation of a mere drunken lout of the *Arabian Nights* could have been accomplished only by rare intuition and literary skill.

Evidently Holberg's best domestic comedies of character are not crude farces, nor are they mere perfunctory repetitions of a conventional method of comic construction. Such farcical forms are conditions of his work without being restrictions upon its essential originality. His distinctive comic power results from his ability to be at the same time buffoon, critic, and philosopher.

The plays of the second class—simple comedies of character—are in structure so closely similar to the plays just considered that they need no detailed analysis. They differ from the domestic comedies only in the absence of the family group. This lack produces no real difference in the author's method, yet it makes the central character much less convincing. Without the striking reality which the homely bourgeois family establishes, the central figure seems a palpable dramatic fiction, a puppet invented as obviously as the intrigue which displays him.

The method employed in the plays of the third class — the comedies of intrigue — varies necessarily with the nature of each intrigue. Yet each comedy is usually the mere presentation of a series of tricks which has been devised by a roguish servant in the interest of his master, for the sole purpose of fleecing some credulous or stupid fool. Touches of characterization, some of them very penetrating, may be given by the way; but the main dramatic purpose of these plays is to arouse comparatively thoughtless laughter at the success of some practical joke. *The Eleventh of June* is a fair example of this class.

The first act of the comedy shows us Skyldenborg in desperate straits. He must have money to pay the debts which will fall due on the eleventh of June, the end of the fiscal year. He tries at first to get it by daring, but unsuccessful, schemes for swindling unwary strangers. His servant Henrich, as a last resort, forms an ingenious plan. A young countryman named Studenstrup is expected in town to collect a debt from Skyldenborg. Henrich, in collusion with his master, pretends to be the boy's cousin, and, while appearing to offer him hospitality, takes him to a house of doubtful reputation, where, with the help of the proprietor, he intends to rob him thoroughly. Henrich easily gets Studenstrup into his clutches, and for the last four acts of

the play makes him the victim of a series of cleverly executed tricks. In the end, the farmer's boy, robbed of everything by the adroit and plausible Henrich, is sent home no whit the wiser. Henrich's delight as he divides his spoils with the innkeeper is supposed to be shared by the audience, for it is in the success of the tricks that it must find its incentive to laughter. Such a comedy reveals a less cultivated skill in dramatic construction and a less keen sense for the comic in life than Holberg shows in his comedies of character.

Each of the comedies of the fourth class is so individual that no general exposition of the author's method can be given. Foolish beliefs, as well as absurd social customs, are ridiculed. *Melampe* is a satire on excessive and ostentatious affection for lap-dogs. *Ulysses von Ithacia* is a parody of the extravagant German plays presented in Copenhagen in Holberg's day. *Witchcraft* is a satire against the belief of the ignorant folk in the black art. *Plutus*, like Aristophanes's play of the same name, to which it is ultimately related, is allegorical ridicule of the abuses of wealth. *The Republic*, another allegorical play, sets forth, distinctly in the manner of a moralist, the evils brought upon a state by unpractical and importunate project-makers. And *Sganarelle's Journey to the Philosophical Land* is a satire on insincere professions of philosophy. These

plays, the last three of which are inferior products of the author's old age, are in general the least successful of his comedies. Holberg is at his best when depicting comic character.

In spite of the originality and variety in Holberg's work, his dramatic methods are, in certain respects at least, thoroughly stereotyped. For almost all of his compositions he had one or two definitely conceived models. The necessity of his adopting some such method is patent when we recall the extraordinary rapidity with which he wrote. In 1722, in the short time that elapsed between the projection of the Danish theatre and the opening of the playhouse, he produced five of his best plays; and during the six subsequent years in which Montaignu's company eked out its fitful and precarious existence, he completed twenty-six comedies. This productivity seems the more remarkable when we remember that he had practically no models in his own language which he could follow. All the drama produced in Denmark before him bears the indelible imprint of an entirely different art. The comedies, with one exception, belonged to the type of the so-called "school comedy," from which Holberg learned nothing.

This one exception was a play called *The Comedy of the Count and the Baron*,\* written by a certain Mogens Skeel about the year 1678. It not only

differentiates itself sharply from school comedy, but shows certain points of resemblance with Holberg's work. It is a satire on the newly created nobles of the time of Christian V. Their silly assumption of superiority and their desperate attempts to learn the customs and graces suitable to their rank are effectively ridiculed. The folly of the count and countess in the play shows itself most clearly in their determination to have their daughter marry a rich but rascally baron. The girl is saved from him and enabled to marry her lover by means of a plot devised by the countess's maid and executed with the friendly help of the count's manservant. These features of construction are found in but slightly different form in Holberg's plays. Yet they are almost the distinguishing marks of Renaissance comedy, and Holberg learned to apply them by studying them in forms nearer the prototype, that is, as they appear in the *commedia dell' arte*. He must, however, have known Skeel's comedy, and may have received certain definite dramatic suggestions from reading it.\* The existence of *The Comedy of the Count and the Baron* is important because it proves that Holberg did not introduce ideas of art entirely foreign to Denmark. Neither was he the first to see the comic significance of contemporary Danish life. His work, in a broad sense, must be regarded as a continuation and, in a measure, a completion of

efforts characteristic of the more enlightened part of his nation before his day.

Although Holberg, then, cannot be wholly detached from the intellectual movements of his own country, he certainly drew his inspiration largely from abroad. Most of his dramatic models, as well as his sources of literary inspiration and suggestion, must be sought in literature other than Danish. A single definite purpose unifies all of his work. His treatises on international law, histories, essays, satires, and comedies are but diverse expressions of one absorbing intention. He wished above all else to be the bearer of the intellectual light of eighteenth-century Europe to backward Denmark. To the Danes, therefore, the significance even of Holberg's comedies lay in the fact that they called attention, by contrast, to the social conditions of other and more progressive nations in western Europe.



## HOLBERG AND MOLIÈRE



## CHAPTER III

### HOLBERG AND MOLIÈRE

#### I

OF all the foreign influences to which Holberg was subjected, that of French comedy was naturally the most extensive and persistent. Every playwright of the eighteenth century inevitably felt the widely diffused influence of French drama, and Holberg, for special reasons, felt it with peculiar directness. As early as 1681, King Christian V had commissioned Meier Krone, the Danish ambassador in Paris, to engage a company of French comedians to play in Copenhagen. From that time until 1720, when Montaigu's company was dissolved, French plays were continually presented at the Danish court. The intelligent part of the Danish public naturally derived its dramatic taste from French comedies and from them alone. Montaigu, moreover, the director of the company for which Holberg wrote almost all his plays, was a Frenchman. To meet his views, a comedy must needs be similar to those in which he had been trained. His judgements of Holberg's plays were further limited by his imperfect knowledge of Danish. Before he could give his opinion of them, they had to be translated into French. In writing for the approval of such a di-

rector, and for a public accustomed to French comedies only, Holberg naturally adopted the one comic idiom which they understood.

Many passages in Holberg's autobiographical writings show that his own taste in comedy was not unlike that of his public. He expresses openly his admiration for French literature, and realizes his debt to it with apparent satisfaction. "Paris," he avers, "is the true home of literature. There is no other place in the world where one can make such rapid progress in literary studies or where one can acquire so correct a taste for literature. I must confess that I have to thank French books for everything that I know."

In the light of this statement, Holberg's repeatedly declared admiration for Molière is to be expected; but his comparative scorn for other French writers of comedy, and his manifest contempt for some of Molière's successors, notably Destouches and Legrand, are surprising. He says, for example: "The comedies which have been produced since the time of Molière are for the most part tedious, insipid, and of such a nature that only a depraved taste, like that of Frenchmen of to-day, could take delight in them." Holberg found Molière's comedies his greatest French source of inspiration. He even implies, at least once, that he regarded his imitation of them as manifest. In criticising the taste

of the Danish public in 1746, he remarks: "Both Molière and the authors of our own native plays modelled upon his work have been dethroned, while Destouches and other authors of the same miserable sort have been set up in their places." By "our original plays" Holberg could have meant only his own; no others existed. This definite assertion, added to the obvious reasons for the predominance of Molière's influence upon the incipient Danish drama, compels one to appraise all possible phases of his influence upon Holberg, before one can speak with plausibility of Holberg's relation to any other foreign literature.

From Molière Holberg evidently borrowed stock comic figures, methods of expounding and grouping character, more than one plot, and even innumerable bits of comic detail. Yet these things are the form and not the content of the comic speech of both dramatists. Holberg made systematic attempts to learn Molière's dramatic language, only that he might employ it for the expression of his own native humour. His comic spirit remained unaffected by foreign literary forms. In the first part of this chapter, therefore, we shall review the many lessons of technique that Holberg learned from Molière, utilizing freely in the comparison Legrelle's excellent book, *Holberg considéré comme imitateur de Molière*. Afterwards it will be shown how the Danish author

invariably contrived to make these borrowed forms express his own individual spirit.

Although Molière's technique aided Holberg in the construction of all four types of his plays, it helped him most in the composition of his domestic comedies of character. Indeed, comedy of this sort, regarded as a distinct *genre*, may be said to have been invented by Molière. *Tartuffe* and all the better plays which followed it—*George Dandin*, *L'Avare*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Les Femmes Savantes*, and *Le Malade Imaginaire*—have the distinguishing characteristics of the type. The elements had, of course, existed separately much earlier. French farce for at least a century before Molière had been obviously a kind of domestic comedy. It had been, however, comedy of situation and burlesque incident. Classical comedy, on the other hand, and that written after the classical tradition, had often been comedy of character. But the character ridiculed had never been set in a definite domestic *milieu*. The difference between this drama and Molière's distinctive work can best be demonstrated by a comparison of *L'Avare* with its obvious source, *Aulularia*.

In the Latin play, Euclio's cupidity results in nothing but mockery from the persons about him; in *L'Avare*, Harpagon is a miserly father, whose avarice disintegrates his family. Euclio's suspicion of

Megadorus's motives in wishing to wed his daughter are merely ridiculous; Harpagon's determination to force Élise to marry Anselme, so that he can keep her dowry for himself, is domestic tyranny. The French miser, moreover, insists that his son marry an heiress instead of his beloved Mariane. This arbitrary demand, combined with the miser's greed, leads Cléante first to a discovery of Harpagon's contemptible usury and then to practical confederacy with the robber La Flèche against his father. In every case, therefore, what is in Euclio meant as personal passion, in Harpagon has become a source of general domestic disorder. Euclio is, as it were, an isolated comic figure; Harpagon is a comic member of a bourgeois family.

All of Molière's domestic comedies of character are like *L'Avare* in this respect, — the amusement depends on the way in which the foible of the central character implicates the members of his own household. A writer of such comedies has two distinct problems: first, the construction of the family group; and second, the introduction, the display, and final disposition of the main character. In solving both of these problems, Holberg followed Molière's method, even in details.

The most important unifying figure in Molière's group is the mother. In the few pictures that he draws of a complete bourgeois family, the mother,

worldly-wise and utterly unidealistic, is the ruler. She asserts and obtains her wishes as against those of her husband in all things which concern the organization and conduct of the household, and particularly in all things which concern her daughter's marriage. In *George Dandin*, it is Madame de Sotenville who determines the character of the tyranny to which her wretched son-in-law is subjected. In *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Madame Jourdain is a better embodiment of Molière's bourgeois mother. She represents obstinate common sense in the face of her husband's absurd social pretensions and affectations. Though without influence in curbing M. Jourdain's ambition, she is thoroughly effectual in defeating his plans for marrying their daughter. She opposes him with shrewish fury until she is made a party to the deception which passes off the girl's lover upon M. Jourdain as the son of the Grand Turk.

Though both Madame de Sotenville and Madame Jourdain are hard-headed, efficient domestic tyrants, they do not play their parts so vigorously as the women in *Les Femmes Savantes*, where Philaminte, the wife of Chrysale, forms, with her sister-in-law, Bélise, and her older daughter, Armande, a feminine triumvirate, which rules the family with an iron hand. To this tyranny Chrysale in particular has to submit. He is not only powerless to prevent the arbitrary dismissal of poor Martine, but he is



equally ineffectual in opposing Philaminte's plans for marrying Henriette to the insufferable pedant, Trissotin. Her preposterous scheme is thwarted only because Chrysale's brother, Ariste, devises a trick by which Trissotin is shown to be a fraud.

Thus the mothers clearly rule the household. Their assertions of authority are by no means mere bursts of temper. They are rather attempts, though often irascible and shrewish, to establish a definite domestic policy. The humour of the relation between husband and wife in these groups is founded on a clear conception of a family organization.

Holberg's Magdelone is a middle-class mother holding the same ideas as these women of Molière. In *Pernille's Short Experience as a Lady*, Magdelone's assertion of her power is thoroughly characteristic. She and her husband, Leonard, have a young daughter, who is sought in marriage by a rich old man, Jeronimus. Both parents offer the natural objection to the suitor's age until the old fellow replies as follows :

*Jeronimus.* After all, the match is not so very unequal. In the first place, I am not so old as I may seem; and in the second place, since Heaven has granted me ample means,— sixty thousand dollars in ready money—

*Magdelone.* Sixty thousand dollars, you say?

*Jeronimus.* Yes, sixty thousand dollars.

*Magdelone.* And in ready money?

*Jeronimus.* Yes, in ready money. Does the match now seem so very indecent?

*Magdelone.* I thought that. Mr. Jeronimus was a very old man, but now that I hear that he is n't nearly so old as I thought, I really can't see that there is any great disparity —

*Leonard.* He is too old for her, all the same.

*Magdelone.* Keep still, my dear! You are always interrupting. Let me talk. Since Mr. Jeronimus is n't so very old, and it is Heaven's will, we simply can't refuse his request.

*Leonard.* But we surely can't promise our daughter until we have heard her opinion.

*Magdelone.* You are a regular old woman, my dear. Let me talk. See, here is my hand, Jeronimus, as a pledge that you shall have my daughter.

Such a woman is the same unscrupulous tyrant that we have seen the bourgeois mothers in Molière's plays to be. In *The Fortunate Shipwreck*, Magdelone is similarly assertive. She has been flattered by the pedantic poet, Rosiflengius, until she determines that no one else shall be her son-in-law. Her plan for the marriage of her stepdaughter becomes, it is needless to say, the plan of Jeronimus too. In *Jean de France*, Magdelone does not show her customary worldly common sense. She is completely captivated by the Frenchified airs of her foppish son, while her husband immediately sees how intensely foolish they are. Yet she compels him, unwilling though he is, to simulate her adoring attitude. These women, in spite of much personal

individuality, play parts clearly similar to that habitually taken by the mother in Molière's domestic comedies of character.

The bourgeois father in Molière, in one respect at least, is the distinct prototype of Holberg's similar figure. To be sure, the father in the French comedies is frequently the central comic figure. As such he can obviously retain no fixed conventional nature. Yet, like practically all fathers in Renaissance comedy, the middle-class father in Molière, whatever his importance, always insists that his daughter give up her lover for the man of his choice. Molière is original only in making the customary opposition of the father illustrate the parent's characteristic foible. In *L'Avare*, for example, the miser Harpagon wishes Elise to marry Seigneur Anselme merely because he is willing to take her "sans dot." And the neurotic Argan insists on having Thomas Diafoirus for his son-in-law, so that he may constantly have on hand "les sources des remèdes qui me sont nécessaires."

Holberg is like Molière in making a tiresome convention of parental tyranny serve the needs of his comedy of character. In *The Political Tinker*, for example, Hermann, the pot-house politician, objects to his daughter's lover because he refuses to become a "politicus." Vielgeschrey, who imagines that the duties involved in running his house-

hold force him into a headlong rush, insists on his daughter's marrying a bookkeeper, Peder Madsen. Only an expert, he thinks, will be able to balance his household accounts. And Don Ranudo, the ragged but ferociously proud Spanish grandee, will allow his daughter to marry no one of less importance than the Prince of Ethiopia, a lineal descendant of the Queen of Sheba. Holberg follows Molière, therefore, in transforming an irrational convention of Renaissance comedy into an element of strength in the construction of a new form of comedy of character.

In the plays of both Molière and Holberg, there is a figure belonging to the family whose main dramatic duty is to act as an exponent of common sense. His voice alone is that of disinterested reason. Of this figure as it appears in Molière, Legrelle says: "L'une des plus singulières conventions que la comédie de Molière impose à la bonne volonté du spectateur, c'est assurément celle d'un frère ou d'un beau-frère, l'homme raisonnable de la pièce, et le met dans l'obligation d'user à un certain moment de cette sorte d'infailibilité qui lui est attribuée pour remettre un peu dans la voie du bon sens les esprits passionnés ou aveugles, c'est à dire à peu près tout le monde."

One has but to think of the part that Ariste plays in *Les Femmes Savantes* to realize to what

the critic is here referring. A brother of the poor crushed Chrysale, he sees clearly enough the true nature of Trissotin, and devises the plot by which the fawning flatterer is made to reveal his real character even to the three learned ladies. In *Le Malade Imaginaire*, Béralde, the brother of the ailing Argan, is a similar embodiment of common sense. He really directs the action but little, yet he is constantly protesting in the name of reason against Argan's illusions. Such a mouthpiece of common sense was not the invention of Molière. A similar personage appears even in the comedies of Plautus and Terence, where he is usually an old neighbour who now and then looks over the wall to talk a bit of sense to the obsessed characters. Molière's originality consists almost wholly in giving the figure a definite place in the life of a middle-class family.

A common-sense brother, evidently modelled on Molière's figure, often appears in Holberg's plays. He is rarely, however, a person of importance to the plot; he is rather a mere foil to set off the fool, or a standard by which the folly of the other persons may be measured. Ovidius, for example, in *Without Head or Tail*, plays the part that Holberg usually assigned to this figure. The comedy is a satire on extremes in religious belief. Of three brothers, one, Roland, is violently superstitious; another, Le-

ander, is obstinately skeptical; while Ovidius, the third, takes a sane middle course. A demonstration which a charlatan old witch gives of her power changes completely the position of the two extremists. Roland sees that the old woman is an impostor. The miraculous bases of his faith are, therefore, swept away, and he becomes straightway a complete skeptic. The incredulous Leander, seeing by chance the same demonstration, is terrified by the display of what seems to him supernatural power and immediately accepts devoutly all the superstition that Roland has just forsaken. Ovidius, in the mean time, has remained firm in his reasoned belief. "I consider it just as silly," he says, "to reject every sort of belief as to accept them all. I always take the middle course between skepticism and superstition." To the pedestrian sanity of this compromise he ultimately converts both of his erratic brothers. Ovidius, then, is not only the standard by which the folly of his brothers is measured, but also the embodiment of the common sense which in the end prevails over their folly.

This Ovidius, besides, obviously expresses Holberg's own ideas on the subject treated in the play. In so far as he is merely the author's voice and essentially unrelated to the other characters through the action, he is an unsuccessful dramatic figure. Elsewhere a similar character is nothing but a

critic of the comic extremes embodied in the other persons in the comedy. His lectures, then, have so little relation to the plot that they often seem mere incidental essays on manners. Originally, Holberg's common-sense figure was probably a copy of the similar one in Molière. Usually, both are definitely related to the family in which the dramatic action takes place; both serve as standards by which to measure the folly of the ridiculous characters; and both act, as it were, as intellectual solvents for all the folly that appears in the drama. Holberg, however, by failing to give this oracle of common sense a definite relation to the other characters through the action, makes him seem too often merely a spokesman for the author's ideas.

Other members of the typical family in Holberg's plays, especially the two lovers and the two ubiquitous intriguing servants, seem more directly related to figures of a like sort in the *commedia dell'arte* than to any in Molière. Yet the most important structural members of the household are alike in the comedies of the two writers. In the works of both there appear the worldly-wise mother, who is clearly the ruler of her husband; the father, who, although cowed by his wife, is stubbornly opposed to his daughter's marrying anyone who will not indulge his characteristic foible; a rather artificial man of common sense, a brother-in-law or some

equally convenient relative; and finally, of course, the chief humorous figure. The entire family really exists only to serve as a realistic background for him and to keep him continually the centre of comic interest.

Another set of problems, therefore, to be solved by an author in writing a domestic comedy of character concerns this principal comic figure. And in the introduction, display, and disposition of this all-important personage, the two authors adopt similar methods. The entrance of the comic hero in the plays of both Molière and Holberg is usually postponed until his nature has been vividly described by the family of which he is a member. In *Tartuffe*, the hypocrite (in this case a member of the household only by adoption) does not appear until the beginning of the third act. For two acts, however, the various members of Orgon's family have been talking of little but him. Tartuffe's smug hypocrisy, when at length it is displayed, is funny, therefore, not only in itself, but also because of the satisfaction it affords to a deliberately aroused comic curiosity. The plot of *Erasmus Montanus* is in this respect typical of Holberg's method. The advent of Erasmus, too, has been artfully prepared for by his family. During the first act all the characters talk of nothing but the antecedents and the peculiarities of the young pedant, so that at the moment of his first



appearance, in absent-minded disarray, at the beginning of the second act, the audience is quite ready to laugh at him. His actions need to be merely suggestive and not definitely illustrative. This skilful and economical method of seizing the attention of the audience for one comic figure, and of holding it rivetted there with the least expenditure of dramatic invention, Holberg clearly learned from Molière.

The second period in the comic existence of the central character is alike in both authors. The hero must, of course, display the character which his family has already assigned to him. For the first exhibition of his nature he need not be involved in an artfully contrived situation. But both authors find it necessary to devise a plot which will ensnare him and make him irrevocably the dupe of his foible. In *Tartuffe*, Elmire gives the unctuous impostor an opportunity to make love to her after she has concealed her husband in the room. In this way Tartuffe's elaborate pose is betrayed, and thereafter he is the victim of his own hypocrisy. In *Erasmus Montanus*, the recruiting sergeant traps the pedant by appealing to his love of disputation. When the boy sees into what difficulty his affected scholarship has brought him, he is ready to acknowledge it as folly and to renounce it forever. Tartuffe does not thus reform. His hypocrisy is too clearly a moral fault to be sum-

marily cast off like Erasmus's stupid monomania. Molière's comic heroes are as a rule possessed by a mania too serious to be renounced by a fifth-act repentance. The French author, moreover, enjoyed ending his plays with a sardonic burst of laughter at the silly victim of the folly. Such cynical mirth Holberg found uncomfortable. He preferred to leave his comic heroes completely reformed and happily reconciled with their families. He was willing to blunt the edge of his ridicule for the sake of making more pointed his moral intention.

Neither the subject nor the method of any of Holberg's comedies of manners is borrowed from Molière. Yet some incidental social satire which appears in Holberg has a counterpart in the work of his French master. Though Molière's tiresome inveighing against the medical profession is echoed in Holberg, the Danish writer is much less fond of this sort of fun. While Molière chooses ridicule of doctors for the central idea of three of his comedies, Holberg makes the doctor the main object of his satire in no one of his plays. He says, indeed, with how much seriousness one cannot tell: "All doctor comedies are nonsensical here at home, where the medical profession is composed of excellent men. They are in no way guilty of those faults found among the itinerant doctors abroad." In spite of this apparently ingenuous praise, Holberg does introduce into his

comedies now and then bits of the current, popular satire on the profession. In *The Lying-in Chamber*, for example, among the guests who come to congratulate the young mother into a state of collapse is her learned physician. His pedantic use of Latin, which the patient amusingly misunderstands, and his still more pedantic citation of authorities are the objects of Holberg's ridicule.

*The Young Mother.* I have such horrible dreams at night.  
What can cause such things, Doctor?

*The Doctor.* Dreams, Madam, are of various sorts; there are *somnia divina*, *diabolica*, and *naturalia*, or according to the opinion of Hippocrates, only *somnia divina* and *naturalia*.

On other occasions, when Holberg has Henrich disguise himself as a doctor, the rogue assumes that the only things necessary are a long black robe, equally long excursions into Latin, and an eagerness to disagree violently with his colleagues in every diagnosis. Such incidental bits of satire show Holberg's acquiescence in an almost universal comic tradition, rather than any definite indebtedness to Molière for his conception of effective satire on manners. The relation of the two authors in this ridicule of doctors is typical. When Holberg borrows some of Molière's satire on social customs he reduces it to the position of an insignificant comic device.\*

The plot of one of Holberg's comedies of intrigue, *The Eleventh of June*, is derived in all its essen-

tials directly from *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. \* Parts of the plots of some of his plays which are not properly called comedies of intrigue are also derived from plays of Molière. Some of the dramatic action of *Honourable Ambition* and *Don Ranudo* is taken from that of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and the plot of *The Fortunate Shipwreck* is much like that of *Les Femmes Savantes*. In these works, however, Holberg's art is revealed, not in that dramatic action which is obvious imitation, but, as we shall presently see, in the skilful way in which he has adapted Molière's action to his immediate dramatic purpose, and at the same time transformed French artifice into Danish reality.

Besides these lessons of structure which Holberg clearly learned from Molière, he found much of what may be called his comic decoration in the work of his French master. In all comedy there must be many moments the humour of which depends, not upon their relation to the dramatic purpose of the whole play, but solely upon their own extraordinary and unexpected nature. They are devices for keeping the audience amused by the way, while the humour of a situation or of a character is being systematically yet gradually presented. Comedy of this sort Holberg borrowed freely from Molière. Exhaustive lists of such similarities between the two men have been compiled. † From them we

need choose only enough to show the extent and general nature of this borrowing of detail.

Holberg is sometimes systematic in his use of Molière's comic devices. In *The Busy Man*, for example, he uses one bit of incidental comedy after another in the same order in which these same devices appear in *Le Malade Imaginaire*. This steady correspondence in comic decoration makes the two plays seem strangely alike. Yet both in the characters satirized and in the plots which motivate the action, they are completely unlike. Molière's play satirizes in Argan a man engrossed by his imaginary infirmities, and intent on applying every conceivable remedy to their cure. Holberg's play satirizes in Vielgeschrey one with nothing at all to do, who, nevertheless, believes himself overwhelmed with work. Two characters so unlike are naturally cured of their foibles through the operation of entirely different plots. There is, however, enough similarity in the march of the incidents to allow Holberg at frequent intervals to adapt a comic device in the French play to his immediate purpose.

Argan's fondness for doctors makes him insist that his daughter give up her lover for a young physician, Thomas Diafoirus. Vielgeschrey's excited determination to bring order into the confusion of his household accounts makes him similarly reject Leonora's lover, Leander, in favour of a

bookkeeper, Peder Eriksen. The first resemblance in comic device appears when the father in each play announces to his daughter his selection of her husband. The girl in each case, thinking that her father is surely speaking of her lover, acquiesces enthusiastically in all his praise until at last an unequivocal remark brings her astonished disillusionment. A bit of the dialogue from each of the plays will show the obvious likeness.

*Argan.* Ils disent que c'est un grand garçon bien fait.

*Angélique.* Oui, mon père.

*Argan.* De belle taille.

*Angélique.* Sans doute.

. . . . .

*Argan.* Et qui sera reçu médecin dans trois jours.

*Angélique.* Lui, mon père ?

*Argan.* Oui. Est-ce qu'il ne te l'a pas dit ?

*Angélique.* Non, vraiment. Qui vous l'a dit à vous ?

*Argan.* Monsieur Purgon.

*Angélique.* Est-ce que Monsieur Purgon le connoît ?

*Argan.* La belle demande ! il faut bien qu'il le connoisse, puis que c'est son neveu.

*Angélique.* Cléante, neveu de Monsieur Purgon ?

*Argan.* Quel Cléante ? Nous parlons de celui pour qui l'on t'a demandée en mariage.

*Angélique.* Hé ! oui.

*Argan.* Hé bien, c'est le neveu de Monsieur Purgon qui est le fils de son beau-frère le médecin, Monsieur Diafoirus et ce fils s'appelle Thomas Diafoirus, et non pas Cléante.\*

The following extract from *The Busy Man* is clearly modelled on this dialogue. Yet Holberg did not have the power of holding a dramatic fact delicately in suspense through a long stretch of swift dialogue, a power peculiarly French, which Holberg's exact contemporary, Marivaux, possessed in the degree nearest perfection. The Danish author's imitation of this device lacks much of the charm of the original.

*Vielgeschrey.* He is a sensible young person.

*Leonora.* Yes, that is certainly true.

*Vielgeschrey.* And his father is a fine man. He will follow in his footsteps.

*Leonora.* I have no doubt of that.

*Vielgeschrey.* And within four years he will be the cleverest bookkeeper in the city.

*Leonora.* What? Leander a bookkeeper?

*Vielgeschrey.* His name is not Leander; it is Peder, and he is the son of Erik Madsen, the bookkeeper.\*

The ridiculous social manners of Thomas Diafoirus are much like those of the approved suitor in the Danish play. His pedantic grandiloquence is undoubtedly the model for the magnificent speeches which Leander makes when he is passing himself off as Peder Eriksen. Diafoirus begins the recitation of the remarks he has painfully learned by rote as follows: "Mademoiselle, ne plus ne moins que la statue de Memnon rendoit un son harmonieux lors-

qu'elle venoit à être éclairée des rayons du soleil : tout de même me sens-je animé d'un doux transport à l'apparition du soleil de vos beautés." Leander, though he employs none of Diafoirus's figures of speech, is no less academic and rhetorical. "When I consider my condition, merits, and position," he begins, "I shame myself with the peacock. When, on the contrary, I observe and consider my approaching fortune, I plume myself with the peacock."\*

Thomas Diafoirus, his head crammed with polite speeches that he has learned by heart, and awl with embarrassment, takes Angélique for his prospective mother-in-law. Peder, the bookkeeper, when he stumbles in for his initial appearance in Holberg's play, similarly mistakes the identity of the principal figures. In order to have the embarrassing business over at once, he addresses his speech to the first woman whom he chances to see; and she unfortunately proves to be Pernille, the maid.

*Peder.* I come here according to the agreement between my father, Erik Madsen, the bookkeeper, and Mr. Vielgeschrey, to court you, lovely maiden.

*Pernille.* You are making a mistake, Mr. Bookkeeper, I am the maid. My mistress will honour you with her presence in a moment.†

Before this ill-starred entrance, Pernille and Henrich have formed a plot whereby they are to pass



off the old servant Magdelone upon Peder as Leonora. Peder's blunder, accordingly, gives the maid her desired opportunity of ushering in the simpering Magdelone. It is interesting to note that Holberg wrote *The Busy Man* with his eye so closely fixed upon *Le Malade Imaginaire* that he was able to utilize so insignificant a comic device for his immediate dramatic purpose. As the plots progress, still other similarities in the incidental comedy of the two plays appear. Leonard, in *The Busy Man*, criticises his brother's mania from the point of view of cold common sense, just as Béralde criticises his brother in *Le Malade Imaginaire*. At the close of the plays Vielgeschrey as well as Argan is brought to accept his daughter's lover, though, to be sure, as the result of entirely different plots. Argan experiences an actual change of heart at the sight of Angélique's manifestations of sincere love for him which his feigned death calls forth. Vielgeschrey, for his part, merely accepts a fact adroitly accomplished by an elaborate series of disguises and tricks devised by Pernille. At the last moment, however, each father shows that he is not completely regenerate. Argan consents to his daughter's marriage with Cléante only on condition that he become a doctor. Vielgeschrey makes a similar request of Leander as a sort of condition to his marriage.

*Vielgeschrey.* Is it certain, then, Monsieur, that you will take up bookkeeping?

*Leander.* Yes, dear father, I promise.

*Vielgeschrey.* Then I will call you son-in-law and forget all the injuries that you have done me.\*

The two plays in this way preserve to the end a haunting impression of correspondence, due, in the main, to nothing more fundamental than continued similarity of incidental comedy.

Such systematic borrowing of Molière's comic devices occurs nowhere else in Holberg's work. Yet fugitive bits of the former's comedy appear there constantly. Molière, for example, often gives his dialogue an appearance of wit by casting it in a form of exaggerated symmetry. When two characters become almost lyrical in mutual praise or blame, this exact verbal balance is most effective. The conversation between Vadius and Trissotin in *Les Femmes Savantes* is an excellent example of the mannerism familiar to every reader of Molière.

*Trissotin.* Rien qui soit plus charmant que vos petits rondeaux.

*Vadius.* Rien de si plein d'esprit que tous vos madrigaux.

*Trissotin.* Aux ballades surtout vous êtes admirable.

*Vadius.* Et dans les bouts-rimés je vous trouve adorable.

A moment later, when the compliments of the two change to bitter abuse, their dialogue remains ridiculously antiphonal.

*Trissotin.* Allez, petit grimaud, barbouilleur de papier.

*Vadius.* Allez, rimeur de balle, opprobre du métier.

. . . . .

*Trissotin.* Va, va restituer tous les honteux larcins

Que réclament sur toi les Grecs et les Latins.

*Vadius.* Va, va-t'en faire amende honorable au Parnasse

D'avoir fait à tes vers estropier Horace.\*

Holberg often employs this symmetry, in a form not unlike that of classical stichomythia, to give point to his dialogue. Most frequently it adds piquancy to quarrels in themselves termagant and vulgar.† A typical dispute occurs in *Henrich and Pernille*. The two servants have been engaged in mutual deception. Henrich has passed himself off on Pernille as his master, and Pernille with equal success has fooled Henrich into believing that she is her mistress. While playing these rôles they court and marry each other. When they discover the deception they break out into the following rhythmic denunciation :

*Pernille.* Oh, let me tear his eyes out first !

*Henrich.* Oh, let me wring her neck off first !

. . . . .

*Pernille.* I thought that that hangman's knave was a great dandy.

*Henrich.* I thought that that harlot's slave was a rich lady.

*Pernille.* I see, though, that he is a fool.

*Henrich.* I see, though, that she is a flirt.

*Pernille.* But his very folly dispelled all my doubt.

*Henrich.* But her very flirting dispelled all my doubt.

*Pernille.* He took his master's name and said he was Leander.

*Henrich.* She took her mistress's name and said she was Leonora.\*

The elemental coarse comedy of this scene is undoubtedly refined by the artificially balanced dialogue. Other artifices of Molière's style Holberg seems not to have used to any appreciable extent.† Many of the Frenchman's comic subtleties were palpably unsuited to Holberg's colloquial prose and his insatiable realism. The extensive similarities in incidental humour between the two dramatists are, on the whole, significant not so much because they clarify one's notions of Holberg's art as because they reveal the intimacy of his knowledge of Molière.

Many of the similarities between the work of Holberg and Molière so far discussed have been indicated in Legrelle's study; and, in spite of certain errors in this critic's conclusions, one must admit that Holberg's knowledge of Molière influenced fundamentally his dramatic ideas. It formed his general conception of a comedy of character, especially of a domestic comedy of character. It supplied him with much of the action assigned to the similar members of similarly constituted families. It furnished him with the complete plot of one of his comedies of intrigue. And, finally, it suggested to him many of the most effective bits of his inciden-

tal comedy. With such facts before him, a French critic like Legrelle almost inevitably saw in Holberg merely a weak imitator of Molière. He considered Holberg's divergences from his French master not as significant exhibitions of originality, but as unsuccessful attempts at imitation. His convenient explanation of Holberg as a mere Danish Molière is, therefore, quite inadequate. This phrase, if employed to define the quality of Holberg's humour, is particularly misleading. The works of the two writers undeniably produce radically different total impressions, a fact which proves conclusively that the differences between them are more fundamental than the similarities. Indispensable as Legrelle's study is to every student of Holberg, it should be supplemented and corrected by a sympathetic analysis of his originality in just those plays where his debt to Molière seems most thoroughgoing. Such an analysis will show that into each one of his borrowed forms Holberg introduced much of his own independent comic spirit.

## II

The Danish author, we have seen, found prototypes for many members of a domestic group in the work of Molière. Yet he was too keen a realist to allow well-developed foreign literary types to become his rigid and exclusive models. Once supplied with

the middle-class personages of French comedy, he modified and developed them as Danish reality demanded. His Magdelone, for example, proves often to be a copy of the hard, practical mothers of the bourgeois family as Molière conceived it. Yet in more than one play she becomes an obviously original character, possessing little or no resemblance to Molière's figure. Thus in *Erasmus Montanus*, Nille, as the mother there happens to be called, exhibits none of the hard-headed common sense that the corresponding French person always possesses. She is by nature a wondering creature, and regards the academic accomplishments of her pedantic son with a kind of superstitious terror. She really fears that his triumphant "Ergo, you are a stone," is insidiously causing her limbs to harden. At the same time, the terror arouses in her a kind of maternal rapture; and her husband shares her feeling completely. "Tears often come to my eyes," he says, "when I reflect that the child of a peasant has become so learned." Nille has, therefore, no chance to play the traditional rôle of forcing her attitude towards the son upon a feebly protesting husband. In any case, Nille's simple, wondering nature could never have appeared domineering. Though occupying the same position in the household as that habitually held by Molière's bourgeois mothers, Nille is Holberg's creation. She is drawn from nature. And

her prototype was one of the superstitious, stupid, yet robust peasant women of Zealand.

Holberg's Magdelones are at other times indulgent, comfortable housewives, full of an easy good humour which is utterly foreign to the sharp-tongued females in Molière. Magdelone in *Honourable Ambition*, for example, plays a part obviously similar to that of Madame Jourdain. She is as much averse to her husband's silly longing for a title as is the French woman to her husband's similar ambition. Yet where Madame Jourdain is violent and shrewish, Magdelone is calm and indulgent.

*Magdelone.* My dear husband, I say that I neither can nor will oppose you in this matter.

*Jeronimus.* You can, then, do me a service for which I shall be grateful as long as I live.

*Magdelone.* What is that ?

*Jeronimus.* It is to take the blame upon yourself, so that I may say that I am seeking to be raised to the peerage against my own wishes, but that my wife has her heart set upon a title.

*Magdelone.* That's just it ! We poor women have always to take the blame.

*Jeronimus.* Oh, but help me out in this affair, my chickabiddy ! No one lays up such an ambition against a woman.

*Magdelone.* You may thank God, you men, that you have us for cloaks.

*Jeronimus.* Help me out, anyway, this once !

*Magdelone.* Well, I have taken the blame so often that I may as well take it in this matter, too.\*

The homely humour of this universally true situation is revealed with a directness and a bald realism quite unlike anything in Molière. Magdelone has not come into Holberg's comedy by way of any French comic tradition. She is, on the contrary, an unmistakable transcript from Danish life.

Geske, the bourgeois mother in *The Political Tinker*, possesses characteristics of another sort, yet just as clearly native and original. She is, to be sure, conventionally vigorous in objecting to her husband's neglect of business for political vapourings. Yet her furious outbursts are mere exhibitions of temper. They betray, indeed, a complete lack of control, and leave Hermann von Bremen battered but steadfast in his ideas. Later, when Hermann's political nonsense seems to have resulted in his elevation to the office of mayor of Hamburg, Geske shows immediately the feminine submission which is instinctive with women of her sort. She becomes most deferential to all his wishes. Every change in their way of living which her husband thinks their rise to power demands, she accepts as inevitable. Even orders which arouse in her a natural revolt, she obeys meekly. The supreme test of her submission comes when Hermann concludes a long list of instructions by saying: "Listen. I forgot one thing. You must also procure a lapdog, which you must love as your own daughter. Our



neighbour Arianke has a fine dog which she can lend you just as well as not, until we can find one of our own. You must give the dog a French name, which I shall hit upon when I get time to think about it. This dog must always sit in your lap, and you must kiss it a half score of times at the least, when we have callers.”\* Although nauseated at the thought of kissing Arianke’s dirty beast, Geske bravely acquiesces in this demand of fashion, and later in the play she appears, dressed in all her finery, lugging a great hairy dog about in her arms. Geske in a scene of this sort is drawn with a relentless realism which Molière would have thought indecent.

All of these women are utterly independent of the bourgeois mothers in Molière. They show how much the following sweeping statement of Legrelle needs to be modified: “Le personnage de Magdelone dans Holberg est conçu sur ce modèle [that of the bourgeois mother in Molière]. C’est surtout par ses excès d’autorité, plus ou moins couronnés de succès, qu’elle nous prête à rire, soit à ses dépens, soit à ceux de son mari.”† Holberg had his eyes too firmly fixed on the life about him to let his admiration for any conventional literary type destroy his power of comic invention.

The same uncompromising love of realism led Holberg, at least once, to make even his *amorosa* an individualized peasant girl. The lovers, Leander and

Leonora, are usually, to be sure, ridiculously perfunctory figures. They plainly bore the author. Never having been in love, he apparently made no effort to portray his lovers as possessed of any real emotion. He wished to force the inevitable lovers to occupy a strictly subordinate place ; and he deliberately modelled them, not upon figures which Molière had created out of the absorbing romance of his own life, but upon the mere puppet *amoroso* and *amorosa* of the *commedia dell'arte*. Leonora is never a clumsy imitation of the charming young girls of Molière, or, as Legrelle calls her, “une image pâle et décolorée, une sorte d'ombre vivante, de Lucile ou d'Agnès.” The one time that Holberg gives his *amorosa* a decided individuality, he does not bestow upon her the graces of these French characters. He makes her, on the contrary, a copy of the Danish peasant girls whom he evidently knew. Lisbed, the betrothed of Rasmus Berg, in *Erasmus Montanus*, from the moment that she enters, is a lovesick rustic. She comes in, simpering, with her father, Jeronimus, and her mother, Magdelone, to find out when her lover is to reach home.

*Jeronimus*. Good morning, cousin! Have you any news from your son ?

*Jeppé*. Yes, I think that he will be home to-day or to-morrow.

*Lisbed*. Oh, is it possible ? Now my dream has come true.

*Jeronimus*. What was your dream ?

*Lisbed.* I dreamt that I slept with him last night.

*Magdelone.* Dreams surely mean something. Dreams are not to be despised.

. . . . .

*Lisbed.* But is it really true that Rasmus Berg is coming home to-morrow?

*Jeronimus.* Why, my daughter! You should n't let folks see that you are so much in love.

*Lisbed.* Oh, are you sure that he is coming home to-morrow?

*Jeronimus.* Yes, yes! You hear, don't you, that he is coming home to-morrow?

*Lisbed.* How long is it till to-morrow, dear father?

*Jeronimus.* What silly nonsense! These lovers act like perfect idiots!

*Lisbed.* Oh, I shall count every single moment!\*

The elemental, giggling love of this peasant girl is extravagant enough to make her a caricature. The author's conception of the lovesick girl is, however, neither an impotent copy of something in Molière nor a perfunctory repetition of the *amorosa* in the *commedia dell'arte*: it is rather his own interpretation of Danish life.

This keen insight leads Holberg in many other places away from Molière into channels of striking originality. Even in a mere comedy of intrigue like *The Eleventh of June*, the plot of which is carefully modelled on that of *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, he finds an opportunity to draw native peasant character. In the Danish, as in the French play, the audi-

ence is supposed to derive most of its amusement from the success of a swindling scheme. Yet a farcically conceived fellow from Limousin clearly could not serve as a model for a Danish country lout like *Studenstrup*, the victim in Holberg's play. This boy is so real a representative of the Danish peasantry that whenever he is on the stage, it is his character, and not the intrigue, that holds the interest of the audience. His abysmal stupidity is continually intensified by a petty sort of cleverness which he imagines to be shrewdness. His boasts of cunning in the following passage are particularly amusing because the audience at the time knows that he is securely involved in the toils of the plot. After having been successfully lodged with "cousin Jacob," the proprietor of a disreputable lodging-house, he complains to him of the attempts that the baggage porters have made to cheat him.

*Studenstrup.* As soon as they see a stranger, they think that he is something to angle for. But they shan't cheat me. The *Studenstrups* are n't the sort of folks to be led about by the nose. They know, too, what money is for.

*Jacob.* No, no ! I can see by your face, cousin, that no one could fool you easily.

*Studenstrup.* I could tell any fellow who tried it by his looks, even if he were Alexander the Great himself. Clever as those porters were, I fixed them, just the same. I passed off on them a half crown piece covered with quicksilver for an eight crown piece, and so got back six crowns in change.

*Jacob.* But I am afraid that when they notice their mistake they will come back here.

*Studenstrup.* Then I will swear that they never got the counterfeit from me, for I have some small oaths in reserve, so that I can swear myself clear without perjuring myself. If, for example, I swear that I never agreed to pay them a cent, I mean, as a gift. If I should swear now that I have n't paid those fellows a thing, I add to myself that the money was n't for them, but for others for the porters' work.\*

This boy's credulity and his self-deluded belief in his own shrewdness make him a representative of a universal peasant type. As such he is perennially funny. The presence of this original figure, indeed, makes the essential humour of the play almost completely independent of the borrowed plot. Even in Holberg's comedies of intrigue, the characters, and not the plot, prove to be the comic elements of greatest importance.

The intense interest in human beings which Holberg always showed, led him to transform situations that in Molière are frankly extravagant into devices for illuminating character. The *dénouement* of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* is nothing but picturesque farce. It is an extremely common dramatic conclusion of the Italian Theatre, modified in a manner which allowed the author to introduce the Turkish ballet he had been commanded to devise. M. Jourdain, it will be remembered, finds Cléante, his

daughter's lover, a person of by no means enough importance to satisfy his lofty social aspirations. The despised youth, accordingly, disguises himself as "le fils du Grand Turc," who, it appears, is also eager to marry Mlle. Jourdain. After he has entered in the magnificent array of an Oriental potentate and talked a little gibberish, Turkish dancers begin a gorgeous ballet. This dance, M. Jourdain believes, is a part of his ceremonial initiation into the holy order of Turkish *Mamamouchi*. Once made a member of this exalted order, he delightedly promises his daughter to her disguised lover. The play ends with another ballet, devised to entertain the company until the eagerly awaited notary arrives to arrange for the marriage ceremony. The *dénouement* is thus a mere spectacle, much like that of a modern comic opera. It makes no pretence of being the logical conclusion of a comedy of character.

Now Holberg saw that this inconsequential gambol could be converted into a suitable ending for his *Don Ranudo*. In this play, the comic hero and his wife are the modern representatives of an old and very much decayed family of Spanish nobility. Their daughter has for a lover a rich young parvenu, Gonzalo. His family is, indeed, so scandalously new that his suit is contemptuously rejected by Don Ranudo and his wife. Leonora, the intriguing maid, feels, however, that the marriage must be

accomplished to save the family from actual starvation. Accordingly, she makes use of the plot by which M. Jourdain has been tricked. She has Gonzalo disguise himself as Melchior Caspar Balthasar Theophrastus Ariel David Georgius, Prince of Ethiopia. After this pompous suitor has been announced, Holberg introduces a number of scenes devised to display the character of Don Ranudo and his wife. He pictures the preparations which they make to receive the Ethiopian prince. Although officers of the law have just confiscated all their possessions, including most of their clothes, they are determined to receive the prince with the lofty dignity and *hauteur* that befit members of the ancient nobility of Spain. Don Ranudo accordingly wraps himself in a long black military cape, and his wife dons a dress which their maid has long ago discarded. Then they send word to the prince that they have clothed themselves in this wretched apparel as a kind of desperate penance for their sins. But their religious humility, they will have it understood, has not modified in the least their social self-respect. Don Ranudo refuses absolutely to remove his hat in the presence of the prince. "No! I will never submit to that," he explains, with wounded dignity. "Should I, a Colibrados, a grandee of Spain, who have the right to talk to the King himself with my hat on, — should I stand bareheaded before a mere foreign prince?"

After numerous scenes of this sort of exposition of character, in which Holberg's comic invention is at its best, the intrigue proceeds almost exactly as in Molière. For the Turkish ballet is substituted, to be sure, a gorgeous procession of Arabs who form the retinue of the prince. Then the lover's disguise, as in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, accomplishes its purpose. To the overwhelming shame of Don Ranudo and his wife, their daughter is actually married to the parvenu Gonzalo before they discover the secret of his disguise. The woman is frankly defeated and crushed by the disgrace. As the curtain falls, she cries to her husband, "Let us go into a cloister." Thus, unlike the central figure in most of Holberg's plays, these insanely proud Spaniards are dismissed as unregenerate. They remain to the end fit only for the mocking laughter of the audience.

Much alike as are the *dénouements* of these two plays, Holberg has made the extravagant burlesque of Molière a more integral part of his comedy. The appearance of the fraudulent Prince of Ethiopia is not the mere occasion for a picturesque ballet. It gives Holberg, on the contrary, a clever opportunity for displaying and developing the characteristic foibles of the Ranudos. He has transformed a device which in Molière is amusing only for its gorgeous extravagance, into a point of illumination in one of



his comedies of character. Holberg's interest in the realistic display of human nature remained primary with him, even when, as in the case of Don Ranudo, the prototype of his figure was not to be found in Danish peasant life.

Holberg's comic heroes differ from those of Molière, however, not only in expressing a more unconditional realism, but also in being possessed by foibles of a distinctly different kind. The satire of the two authors thus becomes an expression of two essentially unlike comic spirits. The objects of Molière's satire are of two sorts. He ridicules, in the first place, fundamental blemishes of character, which usually amount to distinct moral turpitude. Such are the foibles satirized in *Tartuffe*, *L'Avare*, *Don Juan*, and *Le Misanthrope*. The standard by which such follies are measured is simply a normal sense of moral values. Folly of this nature Holberg never ridicules. The second object of Molière's satire is of a slightly different sort. It is a kind of serious mania which engrosses and vitiates the character possessed. Argan in *Le Malade Imaginaire* and M. Jourdain in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* are the victims of this kind of infatuation. The criterion by which such follies are judged is nothing but a normal man's conception of sanity. Molière satirizes, then, in his comedies of character, grave human failings, which, in spite of the implied com-

ment of a mocking observer, lead the action almost inevitably toward tragedy. Indeed, the tragic ending in many of his plays is avoided only by a kind of *deus ex machina*. The nature of Molière's humour is partly determined by this swift and sardonic avoidance of tragedy. To some extent the objects of his satire give his comedy its unique mixture of gaiety and melancholy.

A careful study of Holberg's comedies shows that he is less interested in fundamental reform of character than in a growth of social amenity. In *The Political Tinker*, his object is to ridicule the confidence that a mere tinker possesses in his ability to direct affairs of state. In *The Fickle-minded Woman*, he satirizes intellectual volatility; in *Jean de France*, the affected assumption of French airs and graces; in *Gert Westphaler*, the volubility of a barber; in *Erasmus Montanus*, the complacent and stubborn pedantry of a young scholar; in *Don Ranudo*, the intense pride of a family which has nothing but age to recommend it; in *Without Head or Tail*, both superstition and superficial skepticism; in *The Fortunate Shipwreck*, literary toadying; in *Honourable Ambition*, the eager but timid ambition of a well-to-do citizen for a title; in *The Busy Man*, the feverish, ineffectual activity of one who really has nothing to do; in *Pernille's Short Experience as a Lady*, the eagerness of an old fellow to marry a young girl for reasons palpably

mercenary; in *The Bridegroom Metamorphosed*, an old woman's affectation of youthful frivolity; and in *A Philosopher in his Own Estimation*, insincere professions of philosophy.

No desire to satirize either moral faults or feverish manias provoked the composition of any of these works. The standard by which the follies displayed in them are to be measured is merely a well-developed sense of social fitness. Partly for this reason, Holberg's hearty laughter is never restrained by any underlying melancholy. He knows that his fools are not knaves. They need not so much to experience a fundamental reform in character as to gain a little social sense. Molière's idea of the comic expresses some of that mixture of gaiety and intensity characteristic of the Renaissance; Holberg expresses the easy urbanity of the eighteenth century.

The good-humoured attitude which Holberg habitually assumes toward the world distinguishes his work from that of his French predecessor in other points than in the choice of their comic heroes. The social manners which Holberg chose to ridicule are naturally different in kind from any that Molière could possibly have selected. The latter can hardly be imagined as levelling a satire against inordinate affection for lapdogs, as Holberg does in *Melampe*; against pietistic objections to masked balls, as he does in *Masquerades*; or against a superstitious be-

lief in legerdemain, such as is made fun of in *Witchcraft*. Yet all these social follies are natural objects of Holberg's satiric attack.

The same desire to preach humanistic control is often shown in the incidental essays which Holberg puts into the mouth of Molière's exponents of common sense, who appear in modified form in his comedies. Through these figures, Holberg himself obviously addresses his audience. Leonard, in *Masquerades*, is one of these mouthpieces of the genial author. By his words he attempts to induce his uncompromising friend Jeronimus to take a more reasonable attitude towards the youthful indiscretions of his son, and particularly toward the boy's delight in going to masquerades. After Jeronimus, for example, has threatened his servant Henrich with abrupt dismissal and his son with disinheritance, if the pair ever dance at another masked ball, Leonard makes the following long conciliatory speech :

"Come, come, cousin, do not be so hot-headed ! Let us take the middle course ! Only hear without prejudice my humble opinion of masquerades. I do not condemn masquerades because they are masquerades, but because people make a habit of them. Frivolous ways of passing the time are sometimes as necessary for certain people as food and drink. Aside from the service they render in cheering people up, they are a very ingenious invention, in that they

represent to men the natural equality which existed in the beginning before pride of rank became predominant. In those days, a man considered himself as none too good to associate with anyone. In the same way, so long as a masquerade lasts, the servant is just as good as his master. I condemn, therefore, not masquerades, but their abuse. When young men go to masquerades three times a week, they waste both their money and their health, and besides, they steal three days from the week, — sometimes, indeed, the whole week ; for through continual revel and sleep they become entirely unfitted for business. Licensed masquerades, therefore, exist nowhere throughout the entire year. To dance a certain number of times a year, either masked or unmasked, is no evil ; but dancing which lasts the whole year through, can transform the best ordered city into a huge madhouse.”\*

Long undramatic speeches like this often interrupt the action in Holberg’s comedies. Although usually put into the mouth of a dramatic personage, they are obviously expressions of the author’s own opinions. Holberg seems frequently to have been unable or unwilling to reduce his discursive satire to sharply defined comic action. These incidental essays are the result of that independent satiric temper which distinguishes his comedy at many points from that of Molière.

The radical difference, however, in the effect which the entire work of the two men produces upon even the most superficial reader is due largely to the difference in the kind of realism which they felt bound to show on the stage. Molière was essentially a courtier. He wrote for audiences who possessed an instinctive sense of form and a preference for refined and thoughtful laughter. His figures, however vividly conceived, were drawn only after a certain compromise with realism had been effected. They are usually members of the *bourgeoisie*,—a class rendered thoroughly conventional by social usages. They are, therefore, always well-mannered and decently behaved. They are never dirty, ragged, coarse—in a word, never clearly elemental. These middle-class folk, furthermore, are always seen, as it were, only in the highly polished mirror of some drawing-room, and they have been made as respectable as possible for the social ceremony of their introduction. Molière's audiences were not supposed to grow unbecomingly merry. However keenly they were amused, their laughter was always condescending, and, like all thoughtful mirth, politely restrained.

Holberg, on the contrary, wrote for people with little or no literary and dramatic background. They were not satisfied with comedy unless it aroused their hearty and boisterous laughter. To amuse them

Holberg became thoroughly uncompromising in his realism. He took them without apology directly into the stuffy houses of Jeronimus and Magdelone, into a lying-in chamber, or even to see the dirty, drunken peasant Jeppe lying on a dung-heap. He insisted that his audiences should see everything that he saw, so that they might join him in his shouts of glee. If the thoughtful members of the crowd chose, they might comprehend the author's clear satiric purpose; but every one, down to the most reckless, was given all the opportunities for laughter that he craved.

When the comic spirit of two writers is so different, similarities in details of dramatic technique sink to a position of comparative insignificance. It is misleading, then, to regard Holberg as a mere imitator of Molière, or to speak of him as the Danish Molière. He is only a little more reasonably called the Danish Plautus. The truth is, not only that Holberg possessed a profoundly original comic spirit, but also that with the dramatic ideas which he learned from Molière he combined and interrelated those derived from other sources. Therefore, before Holberg's original genius can be finally described, his indebtedness to other dramatic and literary traditions must be as carefully appraised as Legrelle has sought to appraise the debt that he owes to Molière. Legrelle's thesis is too one-sided to be just.





**HOLBERG AND THE COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE**



## CHAPTER IV

### HOLBERG AND THE COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE

THOUGH Holberg is deeply indebted to the plays of Molière, he owes a no less important debt to the *commedia dell' arte*. Curiously enough, this relation has never been thoroughly investigated or accurately appraised.\* Of the many forms which Italian comedy assumed, Holberg seems to have known only the one that flourished in France during the last years of the seventeenth century.

Italian comedians first went to Paris in 1571, at the request of Catherine de' Medici, to take part in the festivities arranged to celebrate the entry of Charles IX and the crowning of his queen. Marie de' Medici also helped to keep performances of the *commedia dell' arte* a fashion of the French court. After 1571, therefore, whenever the troublous times permitted, a troupe of Italian comedians was likely to be playing in Paris. Almost without exception, the most famous Italian actors played there at some time in their career, and many of the important collections of the *commedia dell' arte* are associated with companies which had appeared at the French court.†

These foreign actors invariably returned to Italy after a comparatively short visit. No one of them thought of establishing himself permanently in Paris

until 1662, when the company of Giuseppe Bianchi became definitely settled in the Palais Royal. Since this hall had already been assigned to Molière's company,\* for a long time the two troupes played there on different days. Throughout all the combinations which the French companies effected after Molière's death, the Italians maintained their individuality. They were still great favourites with the public in 1697, when they were abruptly dismissed. The sensitive old king had probably imagined one of their plays, *La Fausse Hypocrite*, to be a satire on Madame de Maintenon. The Italians were driven into the provinces until Orléans assumed the regency, when their theatre was one of the many institutions of amusement to be restored. During the early years of the eighteenth century, a company headed by the well-known Louis André Riccoboni enjoyed great popularity, but it gradually lost favour with the public, and in 1780 it was merged in the Opéra Comique.

Little of Holberg's knowledge even of French forms of the *commedia dell'arte* could have been gained from visiting the theatre.† All of his sojourns in Paris, with the exception of his stay of ten months beginning June, 1725, were made either before the Italian comedy had been reëstablished, or after he had written all save the very latest of his own dramas. The exact knowledge of the conventions and traditions of the *commedia dell'arte* that

his work reveals must, therefore, have been acquired from printed plays. The one collection of this sort which he certainly knew was made by the actor Evaristo Gherardi in 1700. It consists of fifty-five comedies which the Italian actors in Paris had presented between the years 1682 and 1697. Besides this book, Holberg may have seen a collection of the plays of Domenico Biancolelli which he had given in the French provinces during the early years of the eighteenth century, when his company was exiled from Paris.

The *commedia dell' arte* as it appears in Gherardi's collection has lost some of its most distinctive features. Pulcinella,\* the oldest figure, the prototype indeed of many other buffoons, does not appear in any of these late plays. Nor does the renowned Capitano Spavento occupy a position comparable either in importance or extravagance to the one that by tradition is rightfully his. The earliest plays in Gherardi's collection were written fully twenty years after the Italians had been permanently established in Paris, and during much of the time they had been acting in the same theatre with some of the best French companies. This association definitely modified their original comic manner. In Gherardi's plays French satire and French raillery have in a measure superseded the original fantastic action. The zanies restrain their impulse towards physical

farce long enough to utter some of the traditional French diatribes against marriage; and the orgy of trickery and disguising under the windows of Pantalone's house often gives place to a satire on French society, assembled in the gardens of the Tuileries or at the baths of Porte Saint-Bernard.

Moreover, as the actors began to consider themselves Parisians, they became eager to present plays in French. Not trusting themselves to improvise in a foreign language, they engaged French playwrights to compose at least parts of comedies for them. Authors like Regnard, Dufresny, and Palaprat,\* who afterwards made great reputations in plays written for the French comedians, began their careers by writing scenes for the Italians. The whole of Gherardi's book was made up of apparently complete comedies of dialogue thus composed, and so it differed fundamentally from earlier collections of the *commedia dell' arte*. These had consisted of a number of mere scenarios, outlines of the action of each scene, in which the dialogue was left entirely to the actors' improvisation; or they had been collections of various unconnected dialogues and monologues which some character, like the Capitano Spavento, inserted into plays at his own discretion. The material which the French playwright supplied never formed, however, more than a part of an entire comedy. It was eked out with Italian scenes of improvisa-

tion, conceived in the traditional spirit of the naïve *commedia dell' arte*. The French playwrights, then, although often satirizing contemporary Parisian life in a manner plainly influenced by Molière and other French writers of comedy, were compelled to conform strictly to many of the conventions of the Italians. The action had to be based upon the efforts of the *amoroso* to marry the *amorosa* in spite of the determination of her father to have her marry the pedantic old doctor. Colombine had to be given a good chance to display her facility in the invention of impudent intrigues. Arlequin had to be granted the opportunity of assuming numerous disguises and of satisfying his incorrigible appetite for roguery. The cunning of this pair had to result in the duping, not only of Pierrot, the doctor's faithful but gullible servant, but also of the doctor himself, and finally of the father. The play could then end with the happy union of the lovers, and incidentally with the marriage of Arlequin and Colombine.

Practically all the plays in Gherardi's collection, therefore, consist of slightly modified forms of the following four elements: \* (1) The *amorosa's* father refuses to allow her to marry the *amoroso* because he has in view a more advantageous match for her. (2) Colombine, the *amorosa's* servant, invents a series of intrigues which she expects Arlequin, the *amoroso's* servant, to execute. (3) These intrigues

invariably demand the disguising of one or both of the servants. (4) Through the tricks the father is duped into allowing, and sometimes even into aiding unwittingly, the union of the lovers. The plot is never regarded as anything more than a convenient string upon which to hang the otherwise unrelated scenes of horse-play and sheer lawless physical gaiety.

Now Holberg, in at least eight \* of his dramas, uses all the terms of this formula; in two others † he uses it in a less complete, but no less rigid, way. In his comedies of character he has made it a convenient and highly effective means of exhibiting and exploiting the figures of his own invention. In *Jean de France*, for example, (1) Elsebet (*amorosa*), who is in love with Antonius (*amoroso*), has been promised by her father, Jeronimus, to Jean, a Frenchified fool. (2) Marthe (Colombine), her maid, with the aid of the man-servant, Espen (Arlequin), devises an intrigue. (3) The two servants disguise themselves: Marthe as a certain Madame la Flèche; Espen as her servant. (4) In these disguises the two make Jean act so ridiculously that Jeronimus becomes disgusted with him and gives his daughter to her lover, Antonius. Although the Italian formula is here applied with mathematical precision, it produces, in the exhibition and discomfiture of the fool, a new and more pointed result. Similarly, in the other plays of



Holberg where this conventional plot exists in all its tiresome regularity, it always leads the interest beyond itself to the character for whom it serves as a mere foil.

It may be objected that many other comedies besides those of the *commedia dell' arte* and those of Holberg are constructed on the same plan. All Renaissance comedies are, in a sense, mere variations and adaptations of it. Holberg's direct indebtedness to the *commedia dell' arte* at this point is established by the simplicity and rigidity with which he makes its plot the skeleton of his plays. Had he learned to apply the formula from any other source, he could hardly have hit upon that simple form of construction which is characteristic only of the authors of Gherardi's dramas. It is particularly difficult to believe that Holberg learned to use this plot from Molière, who almost never employs it in its bare, strictly conventional form.\* Indeed, Holberg's preference for the simple, undeveloped dramatic plan can be seen from the apparently premeditated way in which he ignores all the modifications and developments which Molière had given it. In those of his plays which are founded on Molière, he refuses to follow his model when it deviates from the conventional form he has firmly fixed in his mind.

In *Le Malade Imaginaire*, the lovers are brought together because Argan, by feigning death, dis-

covers that his daughter Angélique bears him real, disinterested affection. In the joy of this discovery, he consents to her marriage with Cléante. In *The Busy Man*, which follows closely the plan of Molière's play, the lovers are brought together in the old traditional way. Vielgeschrey is duped into giving unwitting consent to the union of the lovers by a complicated plot of disguises, invented by Pernille and executed by Henrich. In *Les Femmes Savantes*, the lovers are enabled to marry because Ariste, the common-sense uncle, finds an easy way of making Trissotin, the suitor approved by the mother, display his fundamental baseness. He has merely to pretend that the fortune of Henriette's family has been lost and Trissotin withdraws precipitately his offer of marriage. Ariste needs none of the hackneyed tricks of roguish servants. In *The Fortunate Shipwreck*, on the other hand, a play clearly written in imitation of *Les Femmes Savantes*, Holberg, ignoring the simple invention of Ariste, brings his lovers together by the old plot of disguises. Henrich is made to appear in the disguise of a Dutch sailor, and to report the unhappy loss of Jeronimus's wealth-laden ship. Holberg's deliberate rejection of Molière's changes in the traditional scheme in these two instances proves his preference for the simple form in which it appears in the *commedia dell' arte*. Without any modifications or refinements, this fur-

nished, as it were automatically, enough action of a burlesque sort to please his audience. When once learned, it was easily adapted to any set of characters. Given this ever available plot, Holberg could devote his invention to the things for which his comedies were primarily written, — the exhibition and reformation of the follies of contemporary Danish society. He made the borrowed plot, moreover, serve his own dramatic ends. An intrigue which existed in the Italian comedy only to carry the audience with some show of logic from one burst of gaiety to the next, becomes in Holberg a means of focusing interest on the characters.

In the *commedia dell'arte* this mechanical plot existed, not for its own sake, but for the conventional figures who found within its bounds unlimited scope for their own characteristic antics. Arlequin, Colombine, Pierrot, the *amoroso*, and the *amorosa* were distinct comic entities, independent of any one play and preëxistent to all of them. Holberg, in adapting the conventional intrigue in which these personages figured, naturally used them as models for similar parts in his comedies. Each of the equivalent Danish figures, therefore, derives much of his dramatic nature from his Italian prototype: Henrich from Arlequin, Pernille from Colombine, Arv from Pierrot, Leander from the *amoroso*, and Leonora from the *amorosa*.

Holberg's Henrich ought, of course, to be regarded as standing at the end of a long development of a European comic type. He descends in direct line from the ingenious slaves of Greek and Latin comedy, whose power of impudent invention he has inherited in part directly. He possesses also some of the keen wit of Molière's Scapins and Sganarelles; but he is certainly most closely related to Arlequin. His schemes for disguise, his horse-play, his peculiar sort of practical jesting, his clownishness, — indeed, all his notions of his duty to the plot and to the audience, are very like those of his Italian prototype.

Arlequin's tradition is among the oldest of those to be found in Gherardi's plays. Neither Pulcinella, whose origin is often thought to lie in really remote antiquity, nor Pedrolino, who plays the principal servant's part in some of the older collections, appears in Gherardi. In Arlequin, Arlecchino has become the most important and characteristic figure in the Italian comedies composed and presented in Paris. As he himself says, "*Fo il personaggio principale, je suis celui qui finis toujours les actes.*" Actor after actor took up the rôle without modifying appreciably its traditional character. Arlequin's conventional costume probably did much to fix his comic nature. He always wore motley. At first it was composed of variegated rags,

patched together at random ; later, the bits of colour were arranged in some regular design. He was, besides, the only character who continued to wear a mask invariably, during the entire period with which we are here concerned. This mask was black and left bare the mouth, which was usually extended across the mask with a white line, so that it seemed to reach from ear to ear. His head was smooth and surmounted by a tiny felt hat. He often wore a rabbit's tail, manifestly as a sign of cowardice. He always carried a flat wooden sword, sticking out behind at an utterly unmilitary angle.\* The details of this costume are significant for our comparative study only in so far as they establish the nature of the laughter which Arlequin must have aroused. Whether he appeared as the Emperor of the Moon or as Proteus, it is important to remember that under the superficial disguise of the moment everyone saw distinctly his motley and his grinning black face.

The principal dramatic action of Arlequin, as of a character Mezzetin, who under certain conditions played Arlequin's part† in his efforts to bring the lovers together, is the assumption of one or of many disguises. As Henrich is similarly interested in the lovers, he naturally imitates with care some of the most successful of these.

Both Arlequin and Henrich often assume the very popular disguise of a doctor. This part is

found in so many sorts of Renaissance comedy that only close similarities between the plots of an Italian and a Danish play in which the servant assumes the rôle, make one able to say with any confidence that Henrich habitually played the doctor because Arlequin had done so before him. In *Les Bains de la Porte Saint-Bernard*, Octave's desire to marry Angélique is thwarted by her father, who insists that she marry M. Tricolors. Angélique, on the advice of Colombine, feigns illness; then Scaramouche, another servant, persuades the father to call in a famous new doctor, whom Arlequin, also instructed by Colombine, impersonates. After making the usual pedantic quotations of Latin and travestyng the learned consultations of the profession, he orders Angélique to be taken to the baths of La Porte Saint-Bernard for treatment. There she meets and marries Octave.

Henrich, in Holberg's *A Journey to the Spring*, plays this doctor's part in a very similar situation. Jeronimus wishes his daughter Leonora to marry, not her lover, Leander, but a rich young fellow named Leonard. By the advice of Pernille, Leonora pretends to be affected by a peculiar malady, which allows her to express herself only by singing arias from German opera. Pernille urges the distressed father to consult the renowned Dr. Bombastius, whom Henrich successfully impersonates. After a

pretended consultation with his assistant, Leander, in snatches of meaningless Latin, he orders the patient to be taken to a famous spring near Copénhagen.\* Leonora is carried thither on the eve of St. John, when the healing powers of the water are supposed to be most active. There she meets and marries Leander.

Holberg's play resembles *Les Bains de la Porte Saint-Bernard* so closely there can be no doubt that it was modelled upon it. In both a similar pantomime is introduced at the same place. The second act of Holberg's play is nothing but a long interlude of pantomime suggested by the tableau at La Porte Saint-Bernard. The following directions for action are given in the Italian play: "The back of the stage opens and discloses the Seine above La Porte Saint-Bernard. One sees many covered boats, and bath tents, and a long line of carriages on the banks of the river. Many boatmen make abusive gestures at one another and hold the stage for some time." In the Danish comedy, the scene at the spring is introduced in the pantomime which stands in place of a second act. The directions are as follows: "The stage is made as small as possible, so that it presents at first only a road to the spring, on which are travelling, not only horsemen, but also pedestrians, with pails, pitchers, bottles. . . . Then the back of the stage is opened, where the spring is seen, and

around it many small tents. At the very same moment is heard a great confused uproar; some are shouting, others are talking, still others swing and crack their whips. Women are knocked down in the rush to reach the spring.”

This pantomime is a picture of a celebration peculiar to Copenhagen in Holberg’s day. It cannot, therefore, be in its details like the tableau in the Italian play. Yet the fact that the similar pantomimes come at the same place in both comedies shows that one is the model for the other, and makes it almost certain that *A Journey to the Spring* is a version of *Les Bains de la Porte Saint-Bernard*. If this is the relation between the two dramas, Henrich, on the only occasion on which his assumption of the rôle of doctor is utilized to carry the action to its desired end, is a copy of Arlequin playing the same rôle. The follies of these mock doctors are always the same, wherever they appear, — an incorrigible eagerness to quote meaningless Latin, and a willingness to let the patient die rather than surrender any of the pedantic formalities of time-honoured professional etiquette. It is, therefore, only by discovering Henrich borrowing from Arlequin, along with his doctor disguise, the entire plot in which it appears, that one can say with any confidence that it was directly from him that the Danish servant learned how to impersonate the conventional stage doctor.



When Holberg makes Henrich play the Baron in *Honourable Ambition*, he has him copy one of Arlequin's favourite disguises. In Gherardi's collection he appears in the rôle eight times,\* and in his actions observes each time a stage tradition that was, it seems, strictly and definitely established. The five most important points in this tradition Henrich follows with the same fidelity:

I. Henrich enters, carried in a porte-chaise, shouting "Hal-tet porteurs." He is no sooner brought to a standstill than he begins to beg Jeronimus's pardon for his plainly premeditated ostentation. "I beg your pardon, my dear sir, for being brought into your presence in this posture." This was the most approved way for Arlequin to make his entrance when playing the grand gentleman. In *Les Originaux*, for example, he enters in a porte-chaise shouting "Arrêtez donc, porteurs, arrêtez. (Sortant de la chaise.) Pardon, ma belle. Parce qu'au Louvre les marauts me portent jusques dans la cour d'honneur." Arlequin makes the same sort of pretentious entrance elsewhere in Gherardi's plays.†

II. Henrich's name, Baron of the Field of Pure Cabbage (Baron von Reenkaalavalt), is probably formed on the analogy of Arlequin en Baron de la Dindonnière, and Arlequin en le Vidame de Cognitoac.‡

III. Henrich amusingly falls out of the spirit of his

disguise back into his own nature when he kisses Pernille, remarking, "That is, *morbleu*, a perfectment fine chambermaid." This resurgence of vulgar taste comes at equally unfortunate and ridiculous moments to Arlequin. In *La Coquette*, he persists in paying attention to Margot, the little sewing-girl, when as the marquis he ought to have been courting Colombine.

IV. Henrich explains grandiloquently to Jeronimus: "Inasmuch as I travel in all sorts of lands, I am compelled to have different sorts of servants. I have a Spanish servant, a French, a Polish, a German, an Italian, and an English one." Even in this peculiarity Henrich seems to be only imitating Arlequin in *Les Momies d'Egypte*, whose servants apparently come from every part of France. "Holà some one," he shouts, "Basque, Champagne, La Fileur, Poitevin, Coupe-jarret."

V. Henrich considers that, to render his disguise convincing, he must pretend to have made easy conquests of numerous women. He ostentatiously gives his Polish servant, Dobre Podolsky, messages to great ladies. "Pay my respects to the Countess and tell her I will visit her towards evening for a game of *Passedix* or *Obscurité*—and if you can find the Mademoiselle on the same occasion say to her, 'Voulez-vous comment formez la chaise autrement perfectment, je parlerons la Contesse de la Baron-

esse que ditez vous.' But no one must hear that." \* Arlequin, before him, considered the display of his power over the ladies one of the most important tricks of his gentleman disguise. "Laquais major," says he, in *Les Momies d'Egypte*, "otherwise known as my secretary, I have left on my desk twenty or thirty billets-doux; go open them and answer them. Laquais minneur, go tell the widow that I shan't come to see her at all. Laquais minimus, go to the old Baroness of Francot—"

These similarities show clearly that Holberg, in creating Henrich's disguise as a baron, followed closely the traditions which had been definitely established by Arlequin in similar disguises. With Henrich once clearly established in a traditional rôle, Holberg uses him solely as the exigencies of his plot demand. His disguise becomes merely a means of exhibiting the absurd eagerness of a retired merchant for a title. Only that part of Henrich's actions, therefore, which is intended as mere exposition of the character of his disguise is traditional; the rest is new. †

Arlequin's ghost-disguise was the one perhaps best suited to the farcical nature of the *commedia dell' arte*. Even in the collection of Flaminio Scala, a favourite joke was one character's mistaking another for a ghost. The disguise, an excuse for much horse-play, is assumed in order to produce in the

victim a state of transcendent fright, in which he will promise whatever Arlequin wishes.\* Once the victim is the *amorosa's* father, whom the ghost terrifies into consenting to his daughter's marriage with her lover, and so fulfils the dramatic destiny of all of Arlequin's disguises.

At least three times Henrich plays Arlequin's rôle of half-ghost, half-devil with all the zany's extravagance. Twice Henrich assumes the disguise to terrify the simple-minded chore boy, Arv,† into confessing his sins. The knowledge which Henrich thus gains, he uses in *The Masquerade* as a kind of whip to force Arv to join in the deception of the father. In *A Ghost in the House*, which is practically a translation of the *Mostellaria*, Henrich not only plays the slave's part by telling the returning father that his house is haunted, but he makes his lie circumstantial by appearing as the ghost which he had invented. This bit of corroborative evidence Henrich could never have presented had Holberg not known of the useful disguise of the Italian clown. Thus it appears that three of Henrich's most characteristic impersonations, those of doctor, gentleman, and ghost, were probably inspired by similar inventions of Arlequin.

Henrich's long seizures of physical farce, always closely related to these disguises, are often in form, always in spirit, faithful copies of Arlequin's lazzi.‡

These lazzi were bits of physical farce or acrobatic dexterity invented by the individual actors and bearing no logical relation to anything in the play. Arlequin, who was always an acrobat and tumbler of amazing skill, was the most fertile inventor of such tricks. One of the most successful takes the form of a dialogue carried on with himself. In *L'Empéreur dans la Lune*, for example, he debates whether he shall hang himself or not. The passage is written as follows: "Ho pour cela, non, mais, vous ne vous en irez pas — Je m'en irai, vous dis-je. (Il tire son coutelet et s'en frappe, puis dit) Ah, me voilà délivré de cet importun à présent, qu'il n'y a personne, courons nous pendre. (Il fait semblant de s'en aller et s'arrête tout court.)" Gherardi, in a note, explains this action as follows: "It is to be observed that in this scene the dashes which follow a phrase indicate that at that point Arlequin changes his voice and his gestures, talking now from one side of the stage now from the other. Those who have witnessed this scene will agree that it is one of the most amusing ever played in the Italian Theatre."\* The humour consists, not only in Arlequin's playing the part of two characters, but even more in his infliction of violent physical punishment upon himself. Without this element the comic device would not contain the physical farce that is an essential part of all lazzi.

Holberg's Henrich plays the same piece of harlequinade more than once. In *Melampe*, Sganarelle (as Henrich is called there) is to act as spy for his master, Polidorus, in a mighty mock war waged for the possession of a lapdog. In order to know how to behave in case of capture, he pretends that he has been caught by one of the enemy, with whom he has the following dialogue: "Now I will imagine that some one arrests me as a spy and takes me into court where the judge asks me, 'To what country do you belong?' (He sits down in a chair)—'I am a German, please Sir.' No that won't do; I must answer in German—'Ich bin a German, Monsieur.' 'No one cares what a spy says.'—'I tell you I am no spy.'—'Who are you, then?'—'I am no one,' whereupon I am put upon the rack. (He lays himself on the floor and pretends he is being tortured.) 'Au, Au, Au!'—'Will you confess, then?'—'Au, Au, Au, stop! I will confess.'""\* The humour in this scene consists, not merely in Sganarelle's acting out an imaginary conversation, but, as in the Italian plays, in the self-inflicted punishment which provides the physical farce that any genuine imitation of Arlequin's lazzi must possess. This one piece of buffoonery, which demands the combined accomplishments of both acrobat and clown, is, whenever Henrich attempts it, an undoubted imitation of Arlequin's similar trick.†

One of the favourite disguises of Arlequin was that of a great potentate from some remote country.\* The only time that Henrich adopts this disguise, in *Don Ranudo di Colibrados*, he seems to be using Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* for his model; yet the physical farce in which Henrich indulges on this occasion is a copy of similar horse-play by Arlequin when he assumes this disguise. His lazzi in *Mezzetin*, *Grand Sophy de Perse*, are the most characteristic. There M. Groguard is so much plagued by the coquetry of his wife, that he is determined to have his daughter marry a Persian. Men of the Orient are the only ones, he thinks, who still rule their wives. Mezzetin, in league with the girl's lover, disguises himself as the acceptable Grand Sophy. In this rôle he makes M. Groguard agree to give his daughter to his son, who is none other than her lover appropriately disguised. But it is Mezzetin's lazzi while playing this part that attract Henrich. The Italian clown satisfies his thirst for physical farce by buffeting and beating poor M. Groguard, and then silences the old man's protests by explaining that he is but observing the conventional Persian amenities. "It [a buffet] is a Persian compliment, which means that you are entirely excused. When I want you to understand that I am your humble servant, I shall give you a good kick in the stomach."

In *Don Ranudo*, the simulated court fool of the

Abyssinian Prince mauls Gusman under the same pretence that he is observing forms of politeness conventional in his native land.

*Gusman.* But, Mr. Interpreter, why are you pulling my hair?

I have done you no harm.

*Interpreter.* That is nothing, my friend. Court fools in Abyssinia never talk without gesturing. — That first gesture merely means “I hope we may become good friends.”\*

The introduction of this same bit of physical farce in the same situation in both plays shows beyond doubt that the two are related, at least at that point.† The physical farce connected with Arlequin’s potentate disguise became in Holberg one of the most amusing antics of the pretended servant of the mock Prince of Abyssinia.

Once, at least, Holberg introduces a still more extravagant trick of Gherardi’s theatre into one of his plays. Yet he uses it only for the delight of his audience, and he disclaims responsibility for the device by referring it explicitly to its Italian source. In *Witchcraft*, a chance auditor overhears Leander, an actor, while he practises the part of a tragic rôle in which he is compelled to summon up Mephistopheles. He thinks that the actor is calling the devil in earnest, and rushes off to spread the news that Leander is an evil wizard. Unfortunately, the public is confirmed in this foolish notion by further rehearsals of the company. For the comedy which



is to follow the tragedy, the actors choose a piece from the Italian Theatre which they call *Doctor Baloardo*. Henrich's principal duty here seems to have been to manipulate something he calls a "doctor-machine." By consulting Gherardi's play, to which he and his master are evidently referring,\* we find that this machine is a sort of skeleton over which the doctor's coat is hung. Arlequin gets inside the skeleton, and after lighting some candles so that the bones may be seen through the coat, he moves the ghostly figure about, to the great terror of everyone. Just as Henrich has crept into a "machine" like Arlequin's and begun to practise his terrifying movements, a man who has come expressly to investigate the stories of witchcraft is brought in on his porte-chaise. When his servants see Henrich, they drop their burden and flee in wild fear. The experience of this man, embellished in the telling, confirms the entire town in its belief in Leander's practice of the black art. Holberg's use of this extravagant device of the Italian Theatre is very clever. Although he is willing to amuse his audience with it, he introduces it into his play in a fashion that enables him to show his own contempt for this most farcical and exaggerated of Arlequin's lazzi.

Henrich, by his adoption of many of these conventional lazzi of Arlequin, together with a number

of his disguises, became very like the Italian zany. He too grew to be both acrobat and clown. Therefore, even his tricks that are in no sense copies of those of Arlequin are none the less conceived and executed in his spirit. His imitation of Arlequin, furthermore, made still other manifestations of the physical farce which permeates the Italian comedy natural and convenient property of Holberg's comedy. The complicated and extravagant action of a scene of the *commedia dell' arte* ended most naturally and conclusively in an outburst of horse-play. Clowns, of course, had to make their exits in an access of grimacing and acrobatic dexterity. Sometimes this farcical exit was extremely crude. In *Le Marchand Duppé*, Mezzetin, after mauling Friquet, simply lets him run out ahead of him, while he gives him a series of dexterous kicks. Even this device Holberg does not scorn to use on occasion. In *A Ghost in the House*, Henrich serves the Jew Ephraim in the same way and sends him out howling with pain.

Usually, however, the final action was more complicated and demanded a more prolonged romp about the stage. The clowns by a sudden common impulse become seized with an appetite for violent physical farce. A few moments of the wildest confusion follow, at the end of which all the actors have disappeared. This boisterous horse-play is an easy substitute for a climax in the legitimate dramatic

action. In the plays in Gherardi's collection the same time-honoured device for an exit often appears. In *Les Chinois*, for example, such a scene is introduced with the comment, "Cette scène est aussi italienne." Pierrot surprises Pasquariel with the soubrette. "He tries to hit Pasquariel, runs away, and hides in the edge of a curtain above the hall door. Pierrot takes a pistol and fires; Pasquariel falls down and they go out." \* Many times Holberg ends his scenes with this essentially Italian farcical device. In *The Busy Man*, Oldfux, the Henrich-Arlequin of the play, has angered Vielgeschrey, and the following action is indicated: "When Vielgeschrey runs after his club, Oldfux creeps under the table, and when Vielgeschrey and Pernille run to the kitchen door, Oldfux raises himself with the table on the other side of the room, whereupon they both run to him, but he upsets the table with the papers and rushes out." † To make the exit of Oldfux effective, all the characters abandon themselves completely to the physical farce which makes them for the moment the clowns that they always are in the *commedia dell' arte*.

Numerous other bits of horse-play in Holberg are plainly conceived and carried out in the spirit of Italian farce. Certain sorts of extravagance can confidently be assigned to the influence of the *commedia dell' arte*. In *Without Head or Tail*, for exam-

ple, Haagen, finding Henrich asleep, sits astride of him and wakes him with a thump of his hand. Henrich, who imagined a moment before that he had seen a ghost, is sure he is being ridden by a witch. He shrieks for mercy, addressing Haagen as "Your Grace," and swears that he has never in his life bothered a virtuous woman.\* This nonsense of ghosts and witches, a favourite convention of the Italian Theatre, appears again in *Pernille's Short Experience as a Lady*. Henrich has disguised himself as a monk for the express purpose of swearing that Lucie, Pernille's mother, is dead. Just as he finishes his story, Lucie appears, to the great terror of all, who naturally think she is her own ghost. Henrich persists in saying she is dead until, in a fit of righteous anger, she rushes at him and pulls off his disguise, "so that he stands in his livery."† This last trick is certainly borrowed from Gherardi. Arlequin's thin disguises were continually stripped off to reveal his ridiculous motley, for which Henrich's livery was but a poor equivalent.

These examples are fairly representative of the large number of lazzi which Holberg clearly invented on models furnished by the *commedia dell'arte*. Henrich is a copy of Arlequin, therefore, in the tricks of his own which he borrowed from his Italian prototype, as well as in the spirit of physical farce which he has communicated to his fellows

in the dramatic action. If Henrich owes to Arlequin not only this incorrigible propensity for physical farce, but, as I have indicated, both his part in the conventional plot and all the traditions of many of his disguises, he owes him by far the greater part of his dramatic nature.

Henrich is like Arlequin, however, in another important feature: he bears the same relation to Pernille that Arlequin does to Colombine. Arlequin loves Colombine, and is persuaded to play his important part in the intrigue only because he hopes thereby to win her. In *La Fille de Bon Sens* he explains his position very clearly: "My master has promised me that if I do well what he has ordered me to do, he will let me marry Colombine, whom I love to distraction. O happy Arlequin! happy Arlequin!" \* In *Le Divorce*, Arlequin, having received a similar promise, is ready to perform fifty deceitful tricks (*fourberies*) if he can but marry Colombine. He could do little, however, despite his willingness, his cleverness in impersonation, and his physical agility, without her coöperation. She is the more quick-witted of the two, and so invariably devises and directs the plot which is to accomplish her mistress's marriage with the *amorous*. Henrich must, nevertheless, perform what she has planned. In some of Gherardi's plays her direction is particularly evident. † She not only invents all the disguises and pre-

tences, and anticipates the results, but she is very careful to explain in detail to all the characters just what they must do. When once the plot is started, she fairly compels its success. Her impudence and pert self-assurance are equal to all difficulties. When she has brought her plot to a successful issue, she and Arlequin follow the example of their master and mistress, and marry.\* Sometimes the marriage has been expected from the first; at other times it comes as a sudden inspiration to the servants and a surprise to the spectators. The agreement is usually concluded in a purely perfunctory way. "Monsieur Hymen," says Arlequin, at the very end of *Le Divorce*, "that is n't all, you have just broken off a match, but it is now your duty to make another between Colombine and me." And Colombine answers: "Oh, very gladly! on condition that we be unmarried at the end of a year."

Arlequin and Colombine appear once in Holberg as it were in their own persons. In *The Invisible Lovers*, Leander's servant is called Arlequin, and the latter's beloved, Colombine. Yet here the manservant, strangely enough, is less an Italian zany than in almost any other of Holberg's plays. The comedy is known to be the dramatization of an incident from Scarron's *Roman Comique*. All the ridiculous situations in which this Arlequin involves himself are the result of his attempts to apply his

master's canons of romantic love. He is not a prolific trickster and clever acrobat like the Italian Arlecchino. Like Scarron's immortal Jodelet, whom he may be definitely imitating, he is much more a Spanish *gracioso*, a figure in Spanish comedy who stood for common sense, vulgar self-interest, and cowardly egotism. The *gracioso* became humorous through the violent contrast he offered to the heroic and high-flown sentiments of the other characters. Sancho Panza is the most famous member of the family of *graciosos* to which this Arlequin of Holberg, as well as his more famous Chilian, is related.

In the plays, however, where Holberg's servants are called Henrich and Pernille, they generally assume the conventional Arlequin-Colombine relation. Pernille, like Colombine, is the inventor and manager of the plot \* which she makes her lover, Henrich, execute. Later, when her intrigue has been successful in bringing the lovers together, she and Henrich often either plainly imply or abruptly declare their intention of marrying each other as a reward, usually self-bestowed, for their part in the intrigue.†

In *The Fortunate Shipwreck* all of these points in the relations of Pernille to Henrich exist. She invents the plot. "I have thought about tricks," she says, "until the blood spins around in my head like a top. Finally I have hit upon the following, which I think is going to succeed." Then she goes on to

describe just what is to happen. Besides, she carefully explains the parts that she wishes the various characters to play: "I want Henrich to pass himself off for a sailor, to come to Jeronimus and make him think that his ship has been wrecked." When this intrigue has been carried to a successful issue, amid general rejoicing, there is a reference to the coming marriage of Henrich and Pernille. "But where," asks Pernille, "did you learn Dutch?" Henrich replies, "I know more than you can imagine; when we are married, I shall show you still more." \*

In many other comedies, all these characteristic features of the relation of Arlequin to Colombine are found existing in the similar relation of Henrich to Pernille. Henrich, therefore, proves to have still another of Arlequin's characteristics, while Pernille in all the essentials of her rôle proves to be modelled on Colombine.

Legrelle naturally asserts that the relation of Henrich and Pernille is founded upon the similar one that exists between the servants in Molière's plays. He believes it is particularly like that between Marinette and Gros-René in *Le Dépit Amoureux*, and Covielle and Nicole in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Yet Legrelle himself says that the dramatic purpose of the relation between these servants is to show "un amour ressenti et partagé par les personnes



d'un rang inférieur, et qui se développe à côté de l'amour heroïque des personnages principaux." Its dramatic value depends on the "antithèse ingénieuse et comique," a contrast which he says, quite properly, was developed with particular success in Spanish comedy. \* Molière, in other words, finds his servants of dramatic value chiefly because in their love-dialogues and love-quarrels they offer a humorous contrast to the more dignified love-episodes of their master and mistress. Henrich and Pernille play parts utterly unlike these. Holberg almost never devotes a line to love-dialogues either of the servants or even of Leander and Leonora themselves. The servants' love-episode consists of nothing but a final abrupt decision to marry. Molière's servants are not primarily the clever, intriguing agents of the author in conducting his plot. Marinette has not Pernille's inexhaustible fund of farcical invention. Gros-René makes no attempt to rival Henrich's clownish lazzi and extravagant disguises. Molière's servants are in certain points more closely related to Spanish than to Italian comedy. Even such of their characteristics as are derived from the *commedia dell' arte* have developed into something original.

Holberg's servants, on the other hand, are Danish equivalents of the Italian figures. Henrich displays Arlequin's unbounded devotion to his master, which

in both of them is a relic of the Latin slave's nature. He has the zany's irrepressible delight in playing tricks, in disguise, in elaborate pretence, in horse-play; the zany's impudence in carrying out the complicated intrigues which the cleverer maid-servant invents.

But Holberg wrote with his eye too intent upon Danish reality to be satisfied with drawing over and over again a figure all of whose characteristics were borrowed and artificial. Henrich from the first shows the result of contact with Danish life.\* In a number of plays he has become something far other than the impudent trickster that Arlequin always is. In *The Political Tinker*, *The Fickle-minded Woman*, and *The Lying-in Chamber*, he resembles much more the Jacob of *Erasmus Montanus*, whose sole education has been his own observation. He expresses the amusement and astonishment of a level-headed young man, full of homespun wisdom, at the follies and contradictions of life. He may exploit the fools a little for his own delight, but he seems most inclined to reason and comments with the wit and skepticism of a peasant's sturdy common sense. There is an irony unknown to Arlequin in this Henrich. He describes, for example, the transactions of the "Collegium Politicum" as follows: "I heard well enough that they deposed emperors, kings and kurfürsts and put others in their

places. Now they talked of tariffs, now of taxes, now of Hamburg's development and the advancement of trade. Now they consulted books, and now they peeked at the map. Richard Brushmaker sat with a toothpick in his hand, so I believe that he must be the secretary of the council.''\* He cannot see why the council has been so foolish as to elevate his master, the tinker, to the office of mayor, but he is keen enough to see the possibilities of the office he shall hold, — that of messenger to the council. He feels that he may count on two or three hundred thaler a year from people who will be eager for audiences with his master. He will take delight in this money, not because he is greedy, but because he wants to show the world that he understands his office. Troels, in *The Lying-in Chamber*, makes similar ironic comment on events. When the play opens, he has just been to the houses of ninety-three women with the news that his mistress has given birth to a daughter, a great miracle that will set the whole town in an uproar. He comments satirically on social fashions of his day. He is amazed at the custom that compels a widow, with a modest competence, to spend so much money in giving her husband an honourable burial that she will have nothing left upon which to live an honourable life. But Troels is particularly amused at his master's apparently groundless suspicions of his

wife, and teases and tortures him with insinuations, the implication of which he always promptly denies, so that the poor old man cannot tell whether the boy is merely stupid or really malicious. These Henrichs have given up the restless invention of interminable tricks and intrigues long enough to display an unexpected, home-bred wisdom. They are no longer an impossible mixture of pert lacquey and unscrupulous slave. They have become representatives of the homely shrewdness of the Danish peasantry.

In *The Masquerade*, Henrich, in addition to making satirical comments on life, speaks in defence and explanation of his own character. In his words the innate courage of the better sort of Danish peasant has its first voice. Although his condition has obvious similarities with that of Jeppe of the Hill, the fate that reduced the feeble-willed Jeppe to a kind of battered submission has stimulated the stronger young Henrich to whimsical revolt. "We are born in poverty," he says, "reared in hunger, and then beaten a half-score of years by a crabbed schoolmaster; so passes all our childhood. When we grow up, we have to moil and toil to keep from dying of starvation before our time." The recreation, the joy that such souls crave is modest and simple: it is motion. The physical elation that comes from dancing, good boisterous dancing, has the power to drive away despair and even sickness because it is joyful

motion. "And I have wished," adds Henrich, with a humour not lacking in profundity, "that we could take the coachman and horses into the masquerade with us, so that the wretched beasts also could have some recreation and a few good times among so many hard days."\* The Henrich who talks in this way is the same one who sees the humour in old men who stagger home drunk from the tavern yet criticise with lofty morality the flightier but more venial dissipations of the young; and the same one who still has enough of Arlequin's clownishness to parade as a ghost before the easily terrified Arv. Never belying his antecedents, never quite forgetting his inherited characteristics, Henrich at his best has grown to the full stature of a national type. He has become the expression of a satirical common sense, of a profound humour, distinctively Holberg's own.

Pernille's development is, in general, so similar to that of Henrich that it need not be traced in detail. Abandoning completely the pertness of Colombine, the mere intriguer, she becomes a character, less clever, perhaps, but infinitely more real. The plot that she invents and carries to triumphant conclusion in *The Busy Man*, for example, is absurdly complicated and artificial. Yet her talk is so persistently concerned with the familiar matters of the household that her actions assume a certain air

of plausibility. When she wants to divert Vielgeschrey's attention from a too close scrutiny of her extravagant intrigues, she tells him that the other hens are pecking his favourite little black hen to death, or she remarks: "The other day I found my master's catalogue on a shelf above his linen clothes in the kitchen; the wretched cook had got hold of it and was going to fry salmon on it." \* Talk about hens and fried salmon changes once for all a conventional *femme d'intrigue* into a very real member of a homely household. In others of Holberg's domestic comedies, Pernille's inherited artificiality is similarly transformed into a robust reality. Her position in the family is always impossible to comprehend; her talk, however, has so much homely verisimilitude that it often beguiles one into belief, not only in her, but in the situations of which she is the centre.

In the figure of Arv † there exists the same mixture of tradition and independent invention that we have found in Henrich. He is always a slow-witted boy, who has never seen the world beyond his own village. His superstition, timidity, and stupidity make him an excellent foil and butt for the quick-witted, worldly-wise Henrich. He seems so clearly to reek of the soil that one thinks of him as a purely Danish figure; yet he stands at the end of a comic tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*. A figure like him, half clown, half stupid peasant, is almost as

old as the *commedia dell'arte* itself. The type probably appeared for the first time in 1570, in the troupe of a certain Juan Ganassa, under a name to which Leoncavallo's opera has given universal currency, Pagliaccio. He was a sort of variation of Pulcinella, but was, unlike him, stupid, slow, and awkward. In the company of the Gelosi he has become Pedrolino,\* who in Scala's collection appears as the valet of Pantalone. He is often charged with watching his master's wife or daughter, but is either outwitted by the other servants, or stupidly falls asleep at his post, or gets drunk with the Capitano Spavento and his servant. During the seventeenth century, however, this figure does not appear in the companies of Italian comedians in Paris. Arlequin in the mean time having adopted many of his stupid ways, continually allowed his attempts at roguery to be foiled by his own stupidity, until about the year 1670, when Dominique Biancolelli, the famous Arlequin of the Italians in Paris, banished this stupidity from his nature. He had discovered that the French public found silly simplicity out of place in a character whom they wanted first of all to be quick-witted. But Arlequin's open-mouthed inanity offered too many obvious chances for successful *jeux de théâtre* to be entirely discarded. The Italian actor Giraton invented, therefore, the figure Pierrot† to inherit the stupidity which Arlequin had abandoned. The

invention amounted to little more than a revival\* of Pagliaccio-Pedrolino with all his characteristic traits.

In Gherardi's plays Pierrot appears very frequently. He is occasionally an independent farmer living in the neighbourhood of the city, † but usually he is the servant either of Pantalone or of the doctor. ‡ This rôle he plays with the witlessness of a country lout. "Monsieur," he says, with a kind of helpless frankness, "you know that in our family we are all fools from father to son. My father was the first swine of his time and in me his nature survives." § His ignorance, he feels, is a thing to boast of. "Ah, father and mother!" he cries, "how I thank you for not having made me learn to read! God knows that books and learning produce nothing but fools." ||

His costume, as it appears in various descriptions and pictures, carries out to perfection the idea of a country bumpkin. His clothes, though apparently white, have all the marks of ill-made homespun; his trousers extend only to the middle of his calves; his blouse is bound with a loose belt; and his broad hat slouches down over his ears. The silly grin which always disfigures his face suits admirably the humour which he generally contributes to the comedy. Colombine asks Pierrot with assumed ingenuousness if he can tell her what marriage is.



*Pierrot.* Surely nothing is easier—you could never have found a better question to ask me.

*Colombine.* Well, then?

*Pierrot.* It is like, for example, a thing when one is together. Your father—married—your mother; that resulted in their being two. And in the same way your grandfather—for his part—Nature—one does n't know how to explain such a mixed-up mess.\*

In spite of occasional gleams of mother wit, the slow boy is no match for the clever schemes of Arlequin or Mezzetin, directed against his master. Arlequin finds him ridiculously easy to dupe or to terrify into stupidity. Pierrot, therefore, in spite of his dog-like devotion to Pantalone, is usually made an unwilling confederate of the tricksters in their machinations.

Arv is clearly a child of this tradition. Henrich's description of him defines his character as clearly as did Pierrot's tell-tale clothes. "The chore boy [*gaards-karl*] has a position in the household only a little higher than the watchdog," says Henrich. "In the last and lowest class is the watchdog; in the next, the chore boy; in the third, the cook;—and in the highest class, the lacquey." Arv, like Pierrot, is funny only because he is stupid and simple-minded. He seems never to have left the estate of which he is a definite part, while Henrich has seen life both at home and abroad, in the company of his young master. Arv's honest stupidity is sharply

contrasted with the worldly wisdom of the confident and cosmopolitan Henrich.

The manifestations of this stupidity are multifarious. He has, for example, the same kind of difficulty as Pierrot in conveying both delicately and lucidly the point of a disagreeable message. In *Jean de France* he knows that his master will surely be arrested if he goes home; yet he cannot bring himself to say that everything is not right, although the perplexed way in which he scratches his head shows Jean immediately that he is seeking a graceful way of breaking bad news. Finally, after he has tried repeatedly to avoid the difficulty by running away, he is frightened into blurting out: "Everything is really all right, but there is something mighty bad about it too." In the next scene his folly is more exaggerated and conventional. Like Scapin in *Les Fourberies*, he hides Jean in a sack and tells the gambler who is seeking him that the suspicious looking bundle contains butter, candles, lace, and vegetables. Then when none of his assertions is believed, he shouts in terror: "But it really is n't Hans Frandsen, Monsieur, I can give my oath on that, for how in the world should he ever get into a sack?"\* Of course, he continually misunderstands with a stupidity too wilful to be really funny. When Leander asks him whether "papa" ate at home to-day, Arv replies, "He ate in his cage

as usual." "You fool!" shouts Leander in reply, "I asked about my father, not about the popinjay."

Pierrot might have been guilty of all these fatuities, for no one of them fixes at all distinctly Arv's social and domestic position. Like Pierrot's actions, they are tricks of a figure whose sole dramatic duty is to be consistently witless. But Holberg was not satisfied to let Arv remain a mere conventional clown. He made him talk and act like the peasant boys he had seen slouching round the houses and barnyards of Danish farms. Arv, made human by this contact with a real chore boy, shows only such stupidity as is consistent with this Danish nature. He has, for example, indignant suspicion of everything that he cannot understand. He believes that Jean de France's incomprehensible French contains insults. "He gives me a dog's name and calls me Garsong," he says. "If he calls me Garsong again, I am certainly going to answer, 'Yes, Fido.' For I was christened Arv Andersen and can prove it by the church-book. But what can I do when his mother lets him call her 'Mare,' which is still worse."\* Pierrot's flashes of mother wit have a touch of sauciness. Arv's substitute for this is a solemn sententiousness, not unsuited to his character. For example, in *A Journey to the Spring*, he realizes well enough what has happened when Leonora does not return with her doctor from the spring during

the night. Yet he tries to reassure the father in generalities, which sound like those vague aphorisms which are often the sum of a peasant's wisdom.

*Arv.* It is possible that there are certain sicknesses which are cured best by night, and certain doctors who do not practise before the sun goes down.

*Jeronimus.* That is true. When a man is struck with a sudden weakness, like a fainting fit at night, he must have a doctor, but in long-continued illnesses the patients are allowed to sleep at night.

*Arv.* O sir! doctors understand that best.\*

His conversation and his actions, furthermore, indicate continually his definite place in the household. "What did we have for dinner?" asks Henrich in *Masquerades*.

*Arv.* Sweet porridge and dried codfish.

*Henrich.* You saved some for me, did n't you?

*Arv.* No, we gave your share to Soldan the dog, because our master says that anyone who can't come to meals in time, shall not have anything to eat. If you can get it from Soldan again, you are welcome to it.†

Bits of homely conversation of this sort occur often enough to make Arv's position in the family seem perfectly natural. A scene like the one in *Christmas Eve*,‡ already quoted in another connection, serves the same purpose. There Arv comes in from the barn to play his loutish part in the Christmas celebration. His chief delight, of course, is to imperson-

ate the traditional Christmas goat. He comes bounding in, covered with a sheet from which two horns protrude, and successfully terrifies the other servants. He feels so much anxiety, however, over Pernille's extravagant fear that he takes off his sheet to assure her that it is he who is impersonating the beast. The schoolmaster a little later makes Arv's stupidity serve as a foil to the children's crammed cleverness. At every moment we are made to see the boy playing a stupid servant's characteristic part in a family holiday.

The conventional and artificial in Pierrot, thus brought into vital contact with Danish reality, have become in Arv natural and native. He, like Henrich and Pernille, does much to create the atmosphere of a simple Danish household. The servants, it may be said, contribute most to the establishment of that middle-class family life which is peculiar to Holberg's domestic comedies of character. In these three figures Holberg has given the essentially popular and extempore figures of Arlequin, Colombine, and Pierrot the only permanent literary form that they have received.

Holberg first took the servants into his plays, it must be remembered, only because he found the plots to which they were essential extremely useful in his hurried writing of comedy of character. Two more figures who are vital parts of the Italian plot,

the *amoroso* and the *amorosa*, have counterparts in Holberg's Leander and Leonora. They are like their Italian prototypes chiefly because they are mere pawns in similar games.\* They love each other only to give the servants an excuse for intrigue. Yet they are not for that reason, as Legrelle asserts, infinitely feeble copies of Molière's lovers. Such an assumption is unfair to Holberg. Molière knew how to portray skilfully and sympathetically the mutual hopes and fears of young lovers. He highly individualizes each couple and their love story. Holberg knew that he could not imitate Molière successfully in drawing characters of this sort. Furthermore, he understood his artistic limitations well enough to make no attempt to introduce into his portrayal of the wooden Italian lovers either originality or diversity. They remain in his plays the perfunctory figures of the *commedia dell' arte* about whose affairs all the other persons are actively concerned. Leander and Leonora owe their bare existence to the *amoroso* and the *amorosa*; they possess little character to owe to any literary tradition.

None of these Danish descendants of figures of the *commedia dell' arte* develop at all logically during the course of the play. Their rigid natures are never swerved from their predestined courses by any clash with men or events. Furthermore, Henrich, Pernille, and the rest are practically the same

persons in every play in which they appear. This complete lack of development and versatility is inevitable in legitimate descendants of figures whose unchanging masks and costumes fixed irrevocably their humorous nature. The reappearance in play after play of favourite characters, once accepted by the audience as a tradition, becomes in itself a source of delight. Holberg, able to take for granted the immediate sympathy of his audience for half of his personages, could devote his dramatic effort to the invention of situations and to the exposition of the nature of the central figure. His use of mask-like figures was dramatic economy. By employing them, he directed the eyes of his audiences more surely and searchingly upon the central character, who absorbed most of his own interest.

Complete lists of comic details which Holberg borrowed from Gherardi's plays have been more than once carefully compiled.\* Of such devices, only those which indicate structural similarities between the two comic systems are of any real importance. The spirit of much of Holberg's drama is like the *commedia dell' arte* because it has inherited the latter's traditions of humour which are peculiarly suited to masked figures. Arlequin and Mezzetin, for example, frequently appear as various gods of classical antiquity. In these parts they are invariably in the grip, as it were, of crude stage machinery which

was obviously planned to imitate the similar effects of the contemporary opera. Jupiter is drawn up through the roof by a pulley, or Proteus and Glaucus flounder on the stage which is supposed to represent the ocean.\* Whatever gods the clowns are intended to be, their Olympian insignia are invariably only a few superficial marks of identification pasted on their motley. The clown always grins incorrigibly through the disguise of the god he is trying to represent at the moment.

Holberg introduces the gods into his plays, at least once, entirely in the manner of the *commedia dell' arte*. In fact, he constructed the prologue of *Without Head or Tail* by combining the prologues of two plays in Gherardi's collection, *Le Divorce* and *Les Chinois*. Holberg's mythological sketch consists of three scenes. In the first, Sganarelle enters and begs the audience to help him in his search for an act of a comedy, which has been somehow lost. He and his fellow players, who expect some of the gods to attend their performance, are thrown into despair by discovering at the last moment that their comedy possesses but four acts. Vulcan, who enters while the search is going on, does not know, Philistine that he is, that a drama ought to have five acts. He goes to the theatre to see a show, the more gorgeous and spectacular the better; so he is scornfully directed to the theatre of the German com-



pany. In the next scene, Jupiter and Apollo are let down upon the stage from the roof, while Momus more humbly enters by the door. Momus proves to be a pedant, fearfully distressed to learn that the comedy is to have but four acts. Apollo, however, has less rigid ideas about the construction of drama. "A comedy is a mirror," he says, "which presents the foibles of mankind in such a way that it amuses and instructs at the same time. When a comedy does that, it is good, no matter what the number of acts may be." "Even the conventions of Molière," he adds, "are no more fundamental dramatic laws than other conventions of Italian or German comedy." Jupiter, convinced by Apollo's liberal criticism, orders the play to proceed. He and Apollo then take seats in the gallery, largely because he wants to show everyone that a seat up there need not bring disgrace.

The various elements of this scene are found in different works of Gherardi. In the prologue of *Le Divorce*, Arlequin comes in to tell the audience that some of the actors are ill, so that the performance cannot be given. His offer to return everyone's money at the box-office is interrupted by Mezzetin, representing Mercury. The motley messenger announces that Jupiter insists on seeing the advertised play. A moment later, Pierrot, in the guise of Jupiter, descends from the roof on the back of a turkey. He has

heard that in the play a man obtains a divorce, and he wants to see how the thing is done, so that he can introduce the custom into Olympian society. He announces that he has brought a few pocket thunderbolts which he will hurl at anyone who dares interrupt the play. Jupiter, as he is here imagined, is clearly the model for the same figure in *Without Head or Tail*, who descends from heaven in a similar way to dispel by his divine fiat a serious embarrassment of the actors. Both gods, after their orders for the continuance of the play, mount to the gallery.

The idea of putting the critical dicta expressed in the Danish prologue into the mouth of Apollo, Holberg found already developed in *Les Chinois*. There, Pierrot, disguised as a little girl, enters to lament her mother's refusal to let her go to the play. Apollo answers the prejudices of the old-fashioned mother with a defence of comedy. "It is the mirror of human life," he says, "which makes vice appear in all its horror and represents virtue in all its glory."\* In the next scene the author of the comedy about to be presented has suddenly lost heart. He sees, too late, hundreds of unsuspected blemishes. He is in despair principally because it consists of but four acts. Thalia, however, decrees that the prologue shall count as the required fifth act, and, turning to the spectators, announces that whoever whistles will be a dead man within a quarter of

an hour.\* Holberg makes the very same question of the propriety of presenting a play with but four acts the occasion for Apollo's criticism of comedy, which is similar to the other Apollo's praise given in *Les Chinois*.

The combination of elements of a similar sort taken from different sources is characteristic of Holberg's work. The result in this case is a prologue full of the comic spirit of the *commedia dell' arte*. No better incarnation of the flippancy of these Italian plays could well be imagined than the burlesque Jupiter dangling from the roof or ascending ceremoniously in his machine to sit among the rabble in the gallery. Yet Holberg, instead of having Apollo repeat his prototype's generalities, makes him express his own ideals for Danish comedy. He gives his scene another characteristic touch when he makes Jupiter take his seat in the gallery solely to set a worthy example to snobs. Holberg, the irrepressible teacher, could not let slip the opportunity of talking a little common sense to his audience, particularly when it would help to fill vacant seats in his theatre.

The Olympians appear in their Italian rôle of critics in another little piece of Holberg's, *A New Year's Prologue to a Comedy*, which was presented in 1723, after Montaignu's company had been playing in Copenhagen for a year, and was an answer to the

criticisms which had been directed against it. As in *Le Divorce* and *Without Head or Tail*, Sganarelle's introductory remarks are interrupted by the appearance of a number of strayed Greek gods. The party consists of Apollo, Mercury, Mars, Vulcan, Momus, Cupid, and Aesculapius, all of whom, with the exception of Apollo, straightway begin to criticise the nature of the plays which the company has been performing. Apollo and Thalia not only answer the critics, but in addition praise the purposes and methods of comedy. In this play Holberg wanted simply to give his critical defence of Montaigne's company a form amusing enough to hold the attention of the audience. The mere appearance of the Italian gods as critics was sufficient for his purpose. He therefore made no effort to reproduce that rollicking, burlesque spirit of Italian comedy with which the prologue to *Without Head or Tail* is permeated.

The only other occasional play of Holberg's, *The Funeral of Danish Comedy*,\* is also closely modelled on one of Gherardi's comedies, *Le Départ des Comédiens*. In the Italian play the arrival of an unpropitious season for drama has compelled the troupe to disband. Arlequin's initial apostrophe to the vacant theatre is interrupted by Colombine, who says that most of the actors are going to leave the stage for some more lucrative employment. "They are coming in here now," she continues, "so that

you can decide with whom you want to associate your fortunes." All then enter, one after another, to explain the professions they are about to adopt. Arlequin, however, remains unattracted until Mezzetin and Pasquariel appear dressed as opera singers, full of a brilliant scheme to give opera in the country. Arlequin immediately decides to cast in his lot with them; and the play ends with a parody of Lulli's *Bellérophon*.

Holberg's work was written for what everyone believed would be the last performance of Montaignu's company in Copenhagen. Although the occasion was almost tragic for everyone interested in the company, Holberg naturally enough treated it whimsically. Henrich does not open the play like Arlequin by pronouncing a lyric lament, but comes upon the stage to examine his grocery bill, which, though showing very meagre purchases of food, he cannot pay. This melancholy occupation is interrupted by Mlle. Hjort, the company's Leonora, who announces that after a lingering illness, Comedy has just died. Another player urges everyone to come to the funeral, which will be attended by various excellent folk, such as a tea-merchant, a vintner, and two children of Israel,—evidently inexorable creditors. Mlle. Hjort then, like the actors in the Italian comedy, discusses her future with Henrich, who advises her to decide, as Colombine had done under similar cir-

cumstances, to become a servant; but she knows of no one who will engage her, for the actors by their direct satire have antagonized all sorts and conditions of men, officers, doctors, lawyers, tinkers, marquises, barons, and barbers. After this inconclusive discussion, the cortège enters. First, the corpse of Comedy, impersonated by one of the actors, is trundled in on a wheelbarrow. Then follows a long line of mourning actors and actresses, with their children. After the procession has marched two or three times round the stage, the barrow is wheeled down into a hole. This last dreadful symbol of eternal separation is too great for Henrich to bear. In the presence of all, he leaps into the grave, determined to be buried with his dear departed friend.

Holberg obviously owes the fundamental idea of this piece to the similar Italian play. In both works a company of cashiered players comes upon the stage to discuss their misfortunes and gloomy prospects before the audience. The imperfect way in which the Italian figures were always identified with their rôles made the appearance of Arlequin and Colombine as mere actors seem natural and consistent with their traditional comic spirit. The appearance of the different members of Montaigu's company in their own persons is much less in the spirit of Holberg's play. To the various burials of the Mass, he may owe the general idea of the death and burial

of Comedy, yet in none of them could he have found the farcical funeral procession in which one may read most clearly the popular appeal of the piece. At the same time it should be observed that the author filled this comedy, created under the influence of one of Gherardi's plays, with broad and realistic humour which was not Italian.

Of all Holberg's dramas, however, *Ulysses von Ithacia* is the most completely saturated with the spirit of the *commedia dell' arte*. Although frankly a parody of the comedies given in Copenhagen by a company of German actors, Holberg undoubtedly derived the form of the work, perhaps the very idea of writing it, from various similar pieces in Gherardi's collection. The flippant, unrestrained gaiety of Italian comedy had always been well suited to this sort of literary jesting. Gherardi's company had played parodies of every kind,—parodies of scenes from contemporary dramas, of entire operas, or more particularly of the inflated shades of the gods and heroes of antiquity who strutted through the operas of the eighteenth century.\* The mere appearance of Arlequin or Mezzetin in the rôle of Jupiter or Ulysses was in itself a complete travesty. The humour consisted, of course, in the incongruity between the traditional grandeur and dignity of these supermen and the traditional triviality of the clowns. The zanies are utterly unable to sink their

personalities in the strange parts they suddenly find themselves compelled to play. In *Arlequin Phaeton*, Arlequin is obliged to impersonate a dashing hero whose every action is inconsistent with his own nature. He is, therefore, constantly falling out of his rôle. He halts and perverts the action. When he should be driving his plunging horses across the firmament, he and his companion Momus amuse themselves by mystifying a liquor-vendor with their aerial calls, or he loses himself in wonder at the signs of the zodiac, which he cannot believe are not real animals. He is finally forced to realize the mere action which his rôle demands, when he is suddenly pulled across the stage in a crude machine from which he is hurled to the floor by a clumsy thunderbolt flung by Jupiter. The play is funny because Arlequin remains incorrigibly Arlequin, when he is supposed to be impersonating a character of an utterly different nature. Many other plays in Gherardi's collection produce their humour in very similar ways. And, like them, Holberg's *Ulysses von Ithacia* is funny because Chilian, the servant of Ulysses, on all occasions falls out of his part back into his clownish nature, whence he contemplates and criticises, not only the part he is supposed to play, but all the action of the piece. *Ulysses von Ithacia* is, however, even more definitely related to Gherardi's dramas, for one of them, *Ulysses and*



*Circe*, furnished Holberg much definite dramatic material from which his comedy is constructed.

Both works present an absurd confusion of incidents in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. After the fighting round Troy has been shown in Holberg's play, Ulysses enters to declare that ten years have passed, Troy has fallen, and it is therefore time to go home. In *Ulysses von Ithacia*, this swift passage of time is even more pointedly ridiculed, where the ten years are supposed to pass during a single speech by Chilian.\* In both comedies, the parts of the wanderings chosen for ridicule are Ulysses's adventures on Circe's island. In *Ulysses and Circe*, the sorceress, through love of Ulysses, causes his ship to be wrecked off her coast. The moment that the Greeks are tossed up into her domain, she changes all of them except Ulysses and Arlequin into animals of various sorts. These beasts, each in a disguise ridiculously partial, execute a chorus of appropriate cries to verses sung by Mezzetin the cat.† Later, they all appear to the horror-stricken Ulysses and Arlequin. The latter, easily recognizing his old comrades even in their animal form, goes about embracing them with so much grief that he finally induces Circe to reverse her charms. When once more the men assume their proper shapes, they eagerly join Arlequin in a parody of the opera *Armide*. Holberg introduces the same bit of wild farce into his comedy. Chilian's

companions are all turned into swine, and, like the bewitched men in the Italian play, they come in crawling and grunting. Chilian, instead of embracing his friends like Arlequin, enters thoroughly into the spirit of their disguise and lashes them with a whip until they get up to protest that they will complain to the author of the play. The operatic *L'Oiseau Bleu* of the Italians has become in Holberg's hand sheer physical farce.

The similarity in the subject-matter of the two parodies is largely adventitious. *Ulysses von Ithacia* is essentially an Italian comedy, first because it is filled with comic devices taken from various plays in Gherardi's collection,\* but most fundamentally because it produces its humour in the peculiar manner here shown to be characteristic of the *commedia dell' arte*. The characters of the figures in Holberg are also utterly unsuited to the situations in which they are compelled to act. They wear no conventional costumes to make their imperfect assumptions of rôles instantly evident. But they continually show that they are merely masquerading in their parts. Chilian rudely dispels all dramatic illusion when he takes off Ulysses's beard and puts it on his own chin to convince the spectators that he is really older than in the preceding scene. The last shred of pretence is literally torn off in the last scene, when two Jewish costumers enter and strip

the principal figure of his hired Ulysses costume, for which he has been unable to pay.\* The actors who impersonate trees and stones are still more easily and obviously shown to be part of a crude masquerade. In this play, then, Holberg finds means as obvious as the conventional costumes of the Italian figures to fix immediately the attitude of the spectators toward the actors and their parts. Farce that was inherent in the *commedia dell'arte*, Holberg has been at pains to produce by numerous devices.

Holberg's debt to the *commedia dell'arte*, as it had come to be played in France during the closing years of the seventeenth century, was evidently fundamental and vital. The perfunctory plot of the lovers is equally perfunctory in his plays. The clownish figures who are most instrumental in developing and conducting that plot appear again in Holberg with many of their most characteristic tricks of disguise, horse-play, and physical farce. Finally, not only numerous comic devices of Italian comedy, but much of its peculiar comic spirit, reappears in only slightly different form in Holberg's dramas. Yet to every element that he has borrowed he has added his own touches of realism. The unrestrained, purposeless gaiety of the Italians has been given point. The clowns, even in the midst of their most extravagant trickery, are unconsciously labouring to help an original personage to show his nature to the

best advantage. One feels in the midst of the wildest vagaries of *Ulysses von Ithacia* that behind this glut of gaiety is the author's serious desire to improve the taste of the Danish public. Certain elements of the *commedia dell'arte* which were sure to appeal to uneducated audiences became, like certain other features of Molière's comedy, a means of illustrating character both realistically and natively Danish.

HOLBERG AND FRENCH LITERATURE  
OTHER THAN MOLIÈRE



## CHAPTER V

### HOLBERG AND FRENCH LITERATURE OTHER THAN MOLIÈRE

**B**OOTH Molière's works and the *commedia dell'arte* exerted an influence upon Holberg of much greater importance than that of any other form of comedy. Yet the Danish writer was too widely read and too catholic in his literary tastes to find his inspiration exclusively in these two sources. His knowledge of French literature seems to have been almost encyclopedic. In the mass of French drama written by Molière's predecessors, contemporaries, and immediate successors, Holberg more than once discovered material suited to his comic purposes. His interest in this literature was natural. The repertory of Montaigu's company, which played in Copenhagen during his youth, contained comedies by Dancourt and Legrand, as well as by Molière. The Danish company, moreover, during the first year of its existence played a translation of Bour-sault's *Ésope à la Ville*. Any curiosity that this familiarity with French drama may have aroused in Holberg could have been thoroughly satisfied by his two sojourns in Paris.

To French comedy anterior to Molière, and therefore free from his transforming influence, Holberg

owes but little. Even the traditional figures of the earlier comedy nearly always assumed forms in Molière which any skilful writer would surely recognize as improvements. Two persons in Holberg's plays, however, seem to attach themselves to the older tradition directly, — Terentia in *The Bridegroom Metamorphosed*, and Jeronimus in *Pernille's Short Experience as a Lady*.

Terentia has many forerunners in the older French comedy.\* In spite of the vigorous remonstrances of her two mature daughters, this old woman is determined to marry again, and, if possible, to ensnare some dashing young officer. The resourceful Pernille, of course, finds a way to cure her mistress of her folly. She has her sister impersonate a gay lieutenant and pay court to Terentia. After making simpering but open advances to the lovely soldier, Terentia manages to induce him to propose marriage. She accepts him with indecent haste and then lets him depart. He has been gone but a moment when a third conspirator enters with the astounding news that the officer has been suddenly and miraculously metamorphosed into a girl. This miracle Terentia thinks is Heaven's punishment for her foolish desire, which she forthwith renounces penitently. *The Bridegroom Metamorphosed* is apparently the last of Holberg's plays, and is one of his feeblest. It is short, slight, and silly. The figure of



Terentia is interesting, however, because it belongs to well-defined French comic tradition.

The old woman ridiculously in love appears first in French comedy in the *Alizon* of "Discret," a play presented in 1638. Though Alizon Fleurie is senile, she has two devoted lovers, M. Jérémie, aged eighty, and M. Karolu, a decrepit old merchant. The comedy consists largely in the coy love-making of these three persons. Karolu kisses Fleurie in the street and she responds with a deal of bashful grimacing and farcical confusion. Such attempts at girlishness, it must be remembered, were made comical largely because the part of Fleurie was played by a man. M. Fournel says of the actor, Alizon, who created the part:\* "Il en avait fait l'étiquette d'un type, celui des vieilles ridicules, dont aucune comédienne n'avait encore pris le rôle." The figure, from the moment of its creation thus definitely conventionalized, reappeared constantly in subsequent comedy. It assumed a very popular form in Quinault's *La Mère Coquette*, and in Thomas Corneille's *Le Baron d'Albikrac* is the centre of a plot closely resembling that of *The Bridegroom Metamorphosed*. La Tante in Corneille's play is in love with her niece's lover, Oronte. To free himself from her persistent advances, he has her servant disguise himself as a Baron d'Albikrac, who professes to be desperately in love with the old lady. His

gross and extravagant attentions satisfy La Tante's idea of passionate love. She fears, moreover, that, should she reject him, he would vent his furious disappointment in revenge upon Oronte. Flattered vanity masking as prudence, accordingly, makes her agree to marry the fictitious baron. Corneille is here imitating Molière's comedy of character, without abandoning the methods of the early Italianate French comedy which were always a part of his dramatic idiom. Holberg's plays, as we have seen, were an amalgamation of the same two comic methods. It is natural, then, that this dramatic experiment of Corneille should resemble *The Bridegroom Metamorphosed*; but the resemblances are only general, and probably largely adventitious. Terentia is perhaps closer to La Tante than to Molière's infinitely more amusing and real Bélise, yet she is quite as much like Lady Wishfort, in a play which Holberg knew, — Congreve's *The Way of the World*. Plainly, one cannot settle upon any definite prototype of Terentia. It is enough to assert that she belongs to a familiar French comedy type.

Jeronimus, the old man in *Pernille's Short Experience as a Lady*, who goes to woo Leonora for his stepson and remains to woo her for himself, is also like one of the types of the older French comedy. A similar figure is not unknown to classical literature. Demaenetus, in the *Asinaria*,\* who compels his son

to sit by while he embraces the youth's mistress, is perhaps the best-known of these amorous old men in Latin drama. Fathers who become the rivals of their own sons appear frequently in French comedy of the seventeenth century. In Quinault's *La Mère Coquette*, Crémante, although old and half-dead with asthma, wishes to marry Isabelle, his son's mistress. Luckily he is balked by the unexpected return of the girl's father, with whom he had long before arranged a marriage between Isabelle and his son. Montfleury in *La Fille Capitaine* (1673) presents an interesting member of this group in the character M. Le Blanc. Although married, he makes love to his nephew's mistress, Lucinde. He is forced to surrender the girl to her lover, however, by the servant Angélique, who, disguised as a firebrand of an officer, pays court to M. Le Blanc's wife.\* Harpagon in *L'Avare*, and to a certain extent M. Jourdain in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, both created out of this tradition, are two of Molière's most individual comic protagonists. The Danish Jeronimus, an ignoble mixture of avarice, deceit, and smug piety, is no less a personality than these old men in Molière. Yet his individuality is not like theirs. Perhaps, therefore, he does not derive the elements of his character from them, but from the simpler form which the amorous octogenarian assumed in earlier French comedy. The influence of this older comedy cannot

be discovered elsewhere in Holberg's work.\* In the two cases just discussed, it is, one must admit, only general and indefinite.

On the other hand, the influence of Molière's successors upon Holberg is occasionally specific and definite. One group of these successors is composed of men who, though beginning their careers as authors for the Italians, later produced equally successful plays for the French theatre. Regnard, Palaprat, and Dufresny were the three most important members of this group. Their work was inevitably modified by the traditions both of the *commedia dell'arte* and of Molière's comedy of character. Yet Holberg's drama is only superficially like theirs. To Dufresny's slight and rather involved comedy of intrigue, his own bears no resemblance. Regnard, in plays like *Le Joueur* and *Le Distrait*, did produce brilliant comedies of character; but he neither employs the motley pawns of Italian farce to conduct his dramatic action, nor does he describe character with Holberg's moral preoccupation. His attitude is nonchalant and cynical. He reproduces the pageant of life as literally as he can, without passing judgement on what he sees. His laughter at the foibles of his characters betrays no desire to correct them. His fools are never reformed, or even improved, by the dramatic action. Valère, the gambler, feels no real regret even at losing his mistress through his

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passion for play. At the end of *Le Joueur*, he cheerfully remarks :

Va, va, consolons-nous, Hector, et quelque jour  
Le jeu m'acquittera des pertes de l'amour.

The irresponsible attitude which Regnard habitually takes towards his characters is the very antithesis of Holberg's determination to impose humanistic restraints upon all his fools.

One of Palaprat's plays, *Le Grondeur*, is a comedy of character in which the intriguing servant plays the traditional rôle of an Italian zany. He accomplishes the marriage of the grumbler's daughter with her lover, by having the youth disguise himself as the Prince of Madagascar. This play, like Holberg's *Don Ranudo*, is a revised version of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*; but it resembles Holberg's play even less than it does that of Molière. There is real psychological fitness in the eagerness of the insanely proud Spaniard to marry his daughter to the Prince of Ethiopia. There is no corresponding fitness in the similar eagerness of an everlasting grumbler to marry his daughter to the Prince of Madagascar. The *dénouement* in Palaprat's play is sheer farce. In Holberg's it is an important part of the comedy of character. Palaprat completely dissociates dramatic elements which Holberg fuses.

A second group of Molière's successors comprises

comic writers like Hauteroche, Baron, and Dancourt, who imitated only their master's more farcical and superficial comedies of manners. They learned from him to write gay social satire, but failed completely to catch his directness and incisiveness. *Christmas Eve* is the only play of Holberg which expresses the irresponsible, purposeless gaiety of the short comedies composed by these men. As a matter of fact this work seems to be based partly on Dancourt's *Colin-Maillard*.

In the French drama, M. Robinet, the old tutor of Angélique, is determined to marry her. She, although in love with Eraste, promises herself in a moment of pique to M. Robinet. Thereupon he summons a band of musicians to play for his friends to dance until the notary arrives. In the crowd of merry-makers is Eraste disguised as a peasant boy. Finally, the guests tire of this form of amusement and some one proposes a game of *colin-maillard*, or blindman's-buff. M. Robinet opposes the suggestion, but he is overruled and himself blindfolded. While he is groping about, the two lovers run off to be married. In *Christmas Eve*, the crisis is precipitated by a similar game. The household of Jeronimus, consisting of Leonora his wife, Leander her young lover, and a swarm of children and domestic servants, is engaged in a homely Christmas celebration. In the course of the evening, a game of blindman's-buff

is suggested. When Jeronimus is blinded, Leonora and her lover run away together. As soon as the old husband discovers their flight, he rushes out after them and drags them back into the house. There Leander's servants set upon him and create such an uproar that an officer of the peace breaks in and arrests all the combatants.

These two scenes are alike in that the game in each case gives the lover a chance to deceive his old rival. Both plays, moreover, display the same predominant comic spirit. Unlike all the rest of Holberg's comedies, *Christmas Eve* is practically pointless. No complicated intrigue is resolved, no social foible satirized, and no central character ridiculed. Like *Colin-Maillard* and, indeed, like most of Dancourt's plays, it merely occupies a definite period of time with thoughtless, unmoral gaiety. Holberg's sole experiment in the comic manner of the lively but careless Dancourt was plainly ill-suited to his genius.

To the influence of Edme Boursault (1638-1701), more a contemporary and rival of Molière than in any sense his successor, we have seen that Holberg was exposed; the one play besides those of Molière which the founders of the Danish theatre thought worthy of immediate translation was Boursault's *Ésope à la Ville*. Traces of the somewhat mechanical methods of this comic moralist can often be seen

in Holberg's work. At least once the same incident does duty in both writers. The two farcically loquacious women who appear in Boursault's *La Comédie sans Titre*\* seem to be the prototypes of the similar figures in *The Fortunate Shipwreck*. In the French play, among a host of people who visit the temporary editor of the journal, *Le Mercure Galant*, are two sisters, who have found particularly instructive one of his essays commending to women "le grand art de se taire." They have visited him, in fact, to ascertain which one of them has learned perfectly her lesson of silence. Then both begin to prove their ability to keep quiet by contradicting and interrupting each other in a torrent of words. According to the stage directions, "elles parlent toutes deux le plus vite qu'il leur est possible," and finally, "elles parlent en même temps."

In *The Fortunate Shipwreck*, among those who appear in court to accuse the satirist Leander of ridiculing them personally are two garrulous sisters. Like the French women, they interrupt each other and talk at the same time in their efforts to prove that Leander's satire against loquacious women was aimed directly at them. These sisters are enough like the two chatterers in the French comedy to be copies of them. Furthermore, the idea of this entire fifth act of *The Fortunate Shipwreck* — that of having sensitive people apply general satire to their own



foibles and then accuse the author of malicious personal ridicule—Holberg may have derived from Boursault's play.

One of the amusing figures in *Le Mercure Galant* is a certain Madame Guillemôt. She enters the office of the editor, furiously angry, saying :

On dit que c'est de moi dont vous voulez parler,  
Quand certaine bourgeoise à qui la mode est douce,  
Pour être en cramoisi, fit défaire une housse.

Then she explains carefully just how she happened to make a gown out of an old couch-cover. Her explanation shows that the satire in the objectionable essay could easily be regarded as a realistic description of herself. Like those prosecuting the poet Leander, whom Holberg obviously meant to stand for himself, she puts on the shoe of the author's satire and then blames him because she finds it a fit.

The construction of *Le Mercure Galant* is loose and mechanical. Oronte, the editor, has merely to take his seat in the office and the odd figures straightway enter one after another to display their foibles. Boursault's *Ésope à la Ville* is constructed in the same artless manner. Although the comedy is given an appearance of organic unity through the complications produced by Ésope's pretended love for Euphrosine, the sole interest of the play lies in the seer's episodic moral comment. The characters form a con-

tinuous random sort of procession. Each person, by the advice that he asks, betrays his folly or actual immorality. Ésope answers every one by narrating an appropriate moral fable; and, by his tactfully indirect sermon, invariably convinces his petitioner of folly and sends him away miraculously reformed. The naïve dramatic method employed in both of these plays is a better didactic than comic medium. Yet Boursault continued to use it until it became a distinct mannerism.

Holberg, whose ethical preoccupation was not unlike that of Boursault, more than once adopts the Frenchman's easy method of making satiric social and moral comment. He employs it, for example, in the last act of *The Fortunate Shipwreck*, some of the incidents of which, as we have seen, were suggested by details in Boursault. There several persons who fancy themselves slandered by Leander's satire are marshalled by his enemy, Rosiflengius, to act as witnesses against him. The young Frenchified dandy, the rough and ready politician, the fickle-minded girl, the pedantic schoolmaster, the garrulous sisters, the affected lady, the bombastic officer,—all these appear, one after another, to prefer their charges. Like the figures in Boursault's comedies, they form a continuous but unrelated procession of grotesques. Similarly, in *The Lying-in Chamber*, the young mother sits in her easy-chair during two acts,

receiving calls from a long line of ridiculous women who do not come and go to satisfy the demands of any plot. They simply chance to visit the same woman on the same day. The people in *Plutus*, who enter one after another to complain of the evils which wealth has introduced into the life of their city, and those in *Witchcraft*, who come to the supposed wizard Leander with innumerable absurd requests, form similar casual processions. This method of writing comedy gives unlimited opportunity for effective satire and for diverse moral comment; it does not produce amusing or even interesting scenes. In the invention of simple, organic, dramatic action, Holberg seldom shows much power. He is too often willing either to allow his characters to indulge in the wild horse-play of Italian zanies, or to arrange that they march as in review before him with the express purpose of being satirized. The second of these substitutes for the action that develops naturally from clash of character, Holberg seems to have learned from Edme Boursault.

Legrand, another writer of comedy who is in no proper sense a successor of Molière, exerted some influence upon Holberg. The only explicit criticism that Holberg makes of him is unfavourable. The delight of the French public in 1725-26 in Legrand's spectacular extravaganza, and its consequent partial neglect of Molière's comedies, provoked him

to disgusted protest.\* To some of Legrand's plays of a different sort, however, he evidently gave a qualified approval. He seems, at any rate, to have been indebted to two of them; for *L'Épreuve Réciproque* probably suggested the plot of *Henrich and Pernille*, and Legrand's *Plutus* is probably the immediate source of Holberg's comedy of the same name. Holberg's knowledge of these plays would have been quite natural. During the years 1725-26, when he was in Paris, Legrand's popularity was at its height. Nine of his comedies were presented, with a total of seventy-six performances, in 1725; and in the following year ten were given, with a total of fifty-seven performances. *L'Épreuve Réciproque* was first played in 1726, the year in which *Henrich and Pernille* was probably composed; and *Plutus*, although first played in 1720, was not printed until 1751,† the same year in which the Danish *Plutus* appeared. Holberg's personal knowledge of Legrand's popularity probably caused him to follow his work with curiosity and to imitate it whenever he could. Rahbek‡ long ago suggested that the source of the plot of *Henrich and Pernille* was either Cervantes's *Novela del Casamiento Engañoso* or the version of the same story which appears as an episode in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and have a Wife*. As an afterthought, he intimates that the Danish plot may be related to Legrand's

*L'Épreuve Réciproque*. This last relation seems, on examination, to be the most probable of the three.

The plot of *Henrich and Pernille* runs as follows: Henrich, Leander's valet, has been sent to town to prepare for his master's arrival. Having access to Leander's wardrobe, he dons his rich clothes and parades as a gentleman. Adorned in this borrowed finery, he wins the love of an apparently rich girl across the way. She is in reality, however, merely the maid Pernille, decked out in the clothes of her mistress Leonora, the betrothed of Leander. When the lovers themselves finally come to town, each one is astonished to learn that the servant has successfully masqueraded himself into the favour of the criminally fickle lover. Both Leander and Leonora are grimly determined that the deception shall be kept up until the disastrous marriage is made. Delighted at their successful hoax, the two servants are proudly wedded. Only after this event does Jeronimus, Leonora's father, succeed in revealing the true situation to all concerned. The lovers then marry happily; the servants beat each other stoutly for their mutual deceit, but decide to accept the inevitable.

The distinctive feature of this plot is the double disguise. Valets and masters had occasionally changed places in French comedy ever since the appearance of Scarron's *Jodelet ou le Maître Valet*, in 1645. In Cervantes's tale, as in Beaumont and

Fletcher's dramatic redaction, which Holberg might easily have seen,\* there is a double deception. Estifania, while her mistress is abroad, by occupying her mansion, fools a certain Perez into believing her a lady of fashion. This fellow, in his turn, by a display of worthless jewels, successfully plays the rôle of a fabulously wealthy copper "king." The two marry, only to discover that they have been mutually duped. These Spanish impostors adopt devices for ensnaring each other similar to those of Henrich and Pernille. Yet they are not valet and maid in the employ of the two real lovers, as in both Holberg's comedy and in *L'Épreuve Réciproque*.

In Legrand's play, Valère, the lover of Philaminte, decides to test her constancy. He accordingly sends her letters purporting to be written by a famous financier who is infatuated with her. Philaminte similarly tests Valère by having a professedly rich lady of fashion write him a love-letter. Each lover answers the test letter so favourably that each decides to put the other still further to proof. Valère has his valet Frontin impersonate the amorous financier at the same moment that Philaminte has the maid Lisette impersonate the fictitious author of her letter. Then each lover gloats over what he supposes is the other's favourable reception of a masquerading servant's wooing. When the servants meet, they, like Henrich and Pernille, decide

to make their own fortunes by marrying. Before the ceremony actually takes place, however, the real situation becomes clear to all. The servants avoid matrimony, while Valère and Philaminte are reconciled.

This plot is like that of Holberg, not only in the essential feature of the double disguise of valet and maid, but also in accomplishing the estrangement of the lovers through similar impersonations by the servants. The emphasis, to be sure, is differently placed. Legrand, whose main interest is in the lovers, devotes but one scene to the mutual deception of the disguised servants. Holberg, always bored in the presence of lovers, gives Henrich and Pernille the centre of his stage and involves Leander and Leonora in their deception only incidentally. All the comic elements of Holberg's play exist in *L'Épreuve Réciproque*. His rearrangement of them is consistent with his well-known dramatic preferences. He regularly made a love story subordinate to a rollicking game of disguise. The differences in emphasis in the two plots do not weaken the probability that *L'Épreuve Réciproque* is the direct source of *Henrich and Pernille*.

Of his *Plutus*, Holberg says: "The impulse for this comedy came from Aristophanes's *Plutus*; but it may be said that I have taken almost nothing but the mere title from it. My play, therefore, may be

called genuinely original.” \* This explicit statement has naturally been accepted as final by all biographers of Holberg. Legrand’s *Plutus*, however, resembles the Danish play so minutely in a number of details that it apparently served as a definite model for it. If this be a fact, Holberg’s statement, to say the least, is disingenuous.

The plot of Aristophanes’s work is in outline as follows: Chremylus, a poor but honest man, enquires of the Delphic oracle whether he ought to teach his son those vices which are essential to the accumulation of riches. The oracle answers by telling him, inconsequentially it seems, to follow the first man he meets on leaving the temple. The man thus indicated proves to be no less a person than the god Plutus, whom Zeus has stricken with blindness. In bestowing his gifts, therefore, Plutus gives impartially to the just and the unjust, until his sight is restored by Aesculapius. Then he makes the deserving rich and the undeserving poor. After the complaints of several of those who have suffered from the god’s wise discrimination have been heard, a mob of delighted citizens, led by the priest of Zeus, decides to pull the king of gods and men down from his seat and to elevate Plutus in his stead.

Holberg’s play is like this only in its most general features. Plutus, his sight already restored by Aesculapius, visits a city which has hitherto been



poverty-stricken. All the citizens, except the sage Diogenes, are overjoyed at his arrival, and one after another besieges him with prayers for his gifts. By the character of these petitions Holberg satirizes the abuses and follies of his own Danish society. These blemishes the god seeks to remedy, both by his severe arraignments of fraud and hypocrisy, and by the just disposal of his gifts. Later, Penia, the goddess of poverty, appears with Plutus before the city council to debate at length the comparative value of their gifts to the city. After much excited comment, the council decides in favour of Plutus and decrees Penia's banishment. But the undisputed sway of the god of wealth soon corrupts the entire community. Jupiter, pained at the general deterioration of the city, descends from Olympus to lead away Plutus, once more stricken with blindness. Then follows a spectacular procession of the triumphant partisans of Penia, with which the comedy ends.

None of the details of this work are like any in the Greek play, and the comic spirit is completely different. Aristophanes, cynical satirist as always, has his comedy end in an orgy of impiety and corruption. Holberg, no less anxious to show the sinister influence of money, benevolently sends Jupiter down to tell the citizens of their mistake and to carry off the vexatious Plutus. Legrand's play is, to be sure,

in general spirit equally unlike the Danish comedy. His moral may be said to be, "Money brings joy to the deserving." In several details, however, his comedy is like Holberg's.

In Legrand, *La Pauvreté* and *Plutus* set forth their respective merits in a debate before two of the characters, at the close of which *La Pauvreté* is ignominiously driven out. In Holberg, *Plutus* and *Penia* have a similar spirited debate before the city council, as a result of which *Penia* is banished. In Aristophanes, although *Penia* pleads her cause before two characters, she has no debate with *Plutus*. At least two of the figures, moreover, who come to beg favours of *Plutus* after he has regained his sight are the same in both the French and the Danish play. In Legrand, *Cistenes*, the poorest man in Athens, has been given 100,000 francs, all the money that he needs. Yet he is utterly unhappy because his neighbour has been given a million. *Plutus*, after hearing his complaint, indulgently brings his portion up to the desired million. In Holberg, *Timotheus*, like *Cistenes*, has been made rich; but his happiness is embittered by the thought that his neighbours too are to become rich. He accordingly begs *Plutus* to let all but him remain in poverty. The god bids him mind his own business. In Aristophanes, there is no such figure as *Cistenes* or *Timotheus*, nor indeed any similar line of petitioners. In

Legrand, Filene, a younger daughter, humbly begs and obtains money from Plutus for her dowry. In Holberg, "an old maid with a long nose" makes a like request, which Plutus benevolently grants, sending her home confident of an early marriage. In Aristophanes, there is no such figure.

These similarities between the French and the Danish plays are, in themselves, utterly trivial. Yet it seems hardly probable that Legrand and Holberg, each independently of the other, should have made the same changes in the Greek comedy. While Holberg may have been justified in asserting that the inspiration for his play came from the *Plutus* of Aristophanes, his source was, strictly speaking, the Greek comedy as rearranged by Legrand. The fact illustrates the secondary and superficial character of Holberg's knowledge of Greek literature.

The title of *The Fickle-minded Woman* immediately suggests a connection with *L'Irrésolu* of Destouches. This relation seems to have been suspected even in Holberg's own day, for he takes pains to mention the fickle-minded woman as one of the characters that no one before him had ever brought upon the stage.\* Yet he knew Destouches's comedy. In one of his *Epistles*, indeed, Holberg criticises *L'Irrésolu* at length, comparing it unfavourably with *The Fickle-minded Woman*. When he pronounces

his play an original, therefore, he feels compelled to add, parenthetically: "It is much older than Destouches's *L'Irrésolu*." This statement is not true. The French comedy is at least two years older than his. Although Holberg was undoubtedly sincere in the belief in his originality, the similarities between the two plays are curious enough to deserve notice.

The same foible is satirized in both comedies. Lucretia in Holberg and Dorante in Destouches are both subject to innumerable changes of mind and mood, and the resemblance between them extends to unimportant dramatic circumstances. The irresolution of Lucretia, for example, is first shown over the use of a porte-chaise. After Henrich, at her command, has summoned the conveyance for her, she suddenly decides to walk. Dorante, too, shows his first change of mind over a coach he has ordered. After Frontin has the *carrosse* ready for him, he, like Lucretia, suddenly decides not to use it. This similarity seems significant, just because it concerns so unimportant a detail. The fickleness of each is afterwards systematically shown in the changing attitude taken towards three lovers. Lucretia has three suitors: Eraste, a serious, economical youth; Apicius, a frivolous fop, happy and heedless to the verge of imbecility; and Petronius, an elderly pedant. When Eraste comes to woo, he finds Lucretia

in a mood of irresponsible gaiety ; while the foolish Apicius finds her in the gloom of religious melancholy. Lucretia is naturally displeased with the character of these lovers ; after numerous fits of irresolution, she finally chooses Petronius, only at the very end of the play suddenly to change her mind and refuse him. Dorante's volatility is shown by similar conduct towards three girls, not unlike Lucretia's lovers : Célimène, whom love renders "bien rêveuse" and vaguely discontented, is similar to the sober, melancholy Eraste ; Julie, whom love exalts into a state of frivolous, careless gaiety, reminds one of Apicius ; and Madame Argante, the amorous mother of the two younger women, is not a poor feminine counterpart of the pedant Petronius. Dorante, to be sure, chooses Julie and not Madame Argante, yet he is no better satisfied with his decision than is Lucretia with hers. His final remark to his servant is the famous "J'aurois mieux fait, je crois, d'épouser Célimène." These resemblances, both in one or two curiously minute details and in the general form of the plays, would hardly be regarded as accidental but for Holberg's own assertion. Without questioning his veracity, one is justified in assuming that when he wrote *The Fickle-minded Woman*, he wrote under the vague, unrecognized influence of a comedy which he certainly knew.

More important, however, than the mere fact of these similarities is the clearness with which Holberg's distinctive dramatic methods are revealed when they are thus applied to a problem previously solved by another dramatist. The simplicity of the action in *L'Irrésolu* seemed to Holberg a dramatic anomaly. The play, he complained, was merely the expansion of one long scene, in which Dorante wavered over the making of but a single decision. His Terentia, like all of his possessed characters, was made to show her irresolution repeatedly. Indeed, much of the ridiculous nature of her foible lies in the simple fact of incessant repetition. Destouches's strict economy of character exposition, more unconsciously, but no less sharply, annoyed Holberg. All of his secondary figures were made too palpably subservient to the exhibition of Dorante. Holberg always refused to allow the strict logic of a plot to restrict unduly his treatment of character. In his best comedies he invariably tried to give the illusion of reality by creating numerous secondary figures, who claimed in their own right the interest of the spectators. This dramatic fulness of life, as opposed to French economy in the presentation of character, may almost be regarded as a distinguishing mark of Germanic, as opposed to Romance genius. Like Holberg, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Hauptmann (in one of his latest plays, *Die Ratten*)

show their interest in establishing the reality of even those persons who are by no means essential to the progress of the plot. *The Fickle-minded Woman*, then, differs from *L'Irrésolu* largely in its diffusion of interest among a number of characters. Holberg is plainly as much concerned about the torpid Eraste and the volatile Apicius as about Terentia; and he makes the return of these two youths to normality, as a result of their association with the fickle girl, fully as important a centre of dramatic interest as the woman's incorrigible indecision. Holberg, moral by nature and conviction, and diffuse by nature, seems to display his qualities almost defiantly when a comparison is forced between them and Destouches's restricted, narrow methods of presenting character.

Holberg's relation to all these French comedies is clearly much less important than his dependence upon Molière and the *commedia dell'arte*.<sup>\*</sup> Except for the monotonous method, learned from Boursault, of presenting a line of heterogeneous grotesques, and except for the plot of *Henrich and Pernille*, Holberg's comedy both in form and in substance would be almost exactly what it is, had he known no French comedy other than that of Molière.

Holberg's knowledge of French literature was not, however, limited to plays. At least two non-dramatic French works gave him dramatic inspira-

tion. In placing the scene of one of his comedies in a lying-in chamber, he was simply following a very old and popular French satiric tradition. The birth of a child, from the Middle Ages until comparatively recent times, was accompanied by social formalities which now would seem extraordinary. One of these forgotten customs demanded the attendance of all the women friends of the *accouchée* at the actual delivery. Later, the *commères* considerably substituted for this inconvenient attendance, formal calls upon the mother immediately after the child had been born. The conduct and the chatter of these visiting women early became an object of French satire. The first to ridicule such customs at all memorably seems to have been the author of the popular *Quinze Joyes de Mariage. La Tierce Joye*, which describes the anxieties of a man during his wife's confinement, makes fun particularly of the lavish expense and the silly talk which the *commères* force upon the confused family. Other satirists, including Guillaume Coquillart, who devoted one of his most daring works to the tattle of these women, followed in the same vein. Of the later satires, the one most like Holberg's play is a certain once popular *Recueil Général des Caquets de l'Accouchée*.<sup>\*</sup> The situation there is curious. A young man visits his cousin, who has lately given birth to an infant. After he has extended his congratulations, he begs her to hide him



behind her bed, so that he can listen to the twaddle of the women who are to call during the afternoon. She consents and arranges a comfortable chair for him behind a curtain. He takes his seat, when, as he phrases it, "toutes sortes de belles dames, demoiselles jeunes, vieilles, riches, médiocres de toutes façons" come in and begin to talk. They are distinguished merely by such titles as "la femme d'un conseiller" and "la femme d'un avocat." The conversation of these women, at first devoted with some attempt at system to subjects like politics and religion, subsequently deteriorates into mere gossip.

In one of the editions of the satire, there is a frontispiece representing the lying-in chamber filled with callers and the man listening with evident amusement to the chatter of the women. This picture might almost serve as an illustration for the second act of Holberg's *Lying-in Chamber*. There Corfitz, the old husband, goes into his wife's room to talk quietly with her. He has no sooner entered, however, than some women arrive to make their conventional calls. To escape them, Corfitz crawls under a table, where, concealed by a cloth, he is compelled to sit and listen to the silly prattle of Anne, the plumber's wife, Ingeborg, the tinker's wife, and the wives of other tradesmen. Corfitz, crouched in an awkward position and almost suffocated by the talk he unwillingly hears, seems to be Holberg's humorous equivalent for the

stiff young Frenchman, who sneers behind his curtain. The Danish housewives and their *barselsnak* are obviously like the French women and their eternal *caquet*. The essential similarity of these two scenes leads one to believe that Holberg became familiar with the French tradition through the medium of this *Caquets de l'Accouchée*.

Holberg may, of course, have known other works on the subject. We have already noted his acquaintance with the old Danish *Comedy of the Count and the Baron*, in which there is a little incidental ridicule of the customs of a lying-in chamber. He may also have known *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*,\* where the thing held up for ridicule is the expense in which the demands of the nurses and the incessant eating and drinking of the *commères* involve the desperate husband.† Corfitz is thrown into tragic despair by the same unreasonable expenses. While he grinds coffee for his guests to drink, he<sup>n</sup> confides his troubles to his friend Jeronimus: "One wishes coffee, another green tea, another tea de poco or de peco or what the devil they call it—so that if this business lasts much longer, I shall hardly have enough money left to buy a cord to hang myself withal."

In the next scene, a maid enters to demand money for this and for that; and when Corfitz thinks that she has at last reached the end of her almost interminable list of expenses, she breaks out: "Noth-

ing more, except twelve crowns for Dantzig brandy which was used in the coffee to-day ; four crowns for brandy for the nurse, who has been ill ; two crowns for sponge-cake ; one for apples ; twenty for a smelling-bottle." Whereupon Corfitz rushes to her, and, putting his hand over her mouth, shouts, "Stop, stop ! The girl is surely possessed."

This farcical distress is clearly an expansion and elaboration of such satire as appears in *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*. The originality of Holberg's play consists partly in the change which he has made in the traditional emphasis. He himself says of his comedy : "My seventh play, *The Lying-in Chamber*, is an attempt to show in a series of humorous scenes that the annoyances to which women in child-bed are commonly exposed are more intolerable than the pains of labour." It is the woman in his play, even more than the husband, who is shown to be the sufferer from the irrational social custom. Her fatigue and her husband's unjust suspicions combine to make her almost a pathetic figure. But Holberg also shows originality in his substitution of individualized Danish women for the conventionalized, nameless callers of the French satires. That part of the comedy which amuses and delights a Danish audience to-day is the procession of various sorts and conditions of men of eighteenth-century Copenhagen.

Holberg seems to have read Scarron's *Roman*

*Comique* with much interest, and transformed one of the stories in that collection into his unusual play, *Invisible Lovers*. Scarron's *Histoire de l'Amante Invisible* runs as follows. Among the ladies who fall in love with Dom Carlos d'Aragon is one closely veiled. Although, in giving the Dom a ring, she shows "la plus belle main du monde," she persists in her refusal to show him her face. Indeed, she still further piques his curiosity by artfully evading him until at the end of eight days he hears her voice mysteriously calling him from the latticed window of a great mansion. To this window Dom Carlos returns day after day to worship a voice, which finally confesses love for him. The lady insists, however, that the magic time for revealing herself has not yet arrived. The gallant, therefore, only redoubles his assiduities, until one evening four masked men seize him, bind him, and take him willy-nilly from the mysterious house to a splendid castle far from the city. Here, after being magnificently entertained and housed for a night, he is led the next morning into the presence of the mistress of the castle, the Princess Portia. Though she unmask her beautiful face and confesses herself desperately in love with him, he, faithful to his fair unknown, will not return her love. He is, therefore, again blindfolded and courteously taken back to Naples, where he repairs immediately to his latticed window. Dom Carlos then

finds his lady at last ready to reveal her face. The ceremony is carried out in a romantic spot, and he discovers to his delight that she and the Princess Portia are one and the same person.

Holberg has made this fanciful tale a kind of setting for the realistic comedy which is the essential part of his *Invisible Lovers*. In the first scene of the play, Leander recounts in long narrative speeches to his servant Harlequin an adventure almost the exact counterpart of that of Dom Carlos. He, too, has heard a charming, angelic voice speak to him in the gloaming from a latticed window. Because his lady has persisted in remaining veiled, he, like Dom Carlos, has been compelled to return night after night to pay court to the voice, until he has been seized by eight masked men and carried to "a beautiful bower." His experiences there have been exactly like those of his prototype, and although he has, with equal constancy to his fair unknown, refused to return the love of the beautiful enamoured mistress of the castle, he has sought to assuage her grief by giving her a ring. Thus far Leander describes events that have already taken place. The rest of the mysterious adventure is presented in dramatic action. When Leander returns to his masked lady, at first he is bitterly rebuked for his inconstancy in giving a ring to another lady; then his despair arouses pity in the fair unknown, who

confesses that she has played the part of the lady of the bower in order to test his constancy.

So far Holberg has told a version of Scarron's tale, but apparently only to ridicule it. He represents Harlequin, enraptured by his master's idealistic conception of love, as attempting to imitate it. The servant suddenly finds Colombine's eager yielding to his lightest wish, shocking forwardness. He scorns her frankly physical love and leaves her to ponder over his high-sounding phrases about the worthlessness of fruit which may be plucked from every tree. He has no sooner turned his back upon the perplexed and frightened girl than he has the extraordinary luck to meet a heavily veiled lady. And, when he begins to make love to her, he finds to his joy that she observes scrupulously all the canons of spiritual love that he has just learned from his master. He immediately pays her entranced, assiduous court, begging her but to show her face to him. After making him swear that his love will be eternal, she removes her veil and discloses the face of an ugly old hag. Colombine enters in time to enjoy his predicament, from which she agrees to save him through marriage with her, but only after he has sworn to give her shocking matrimonial liberties.

This farcical imitation of a formal and pompous master by his servant is, as already indicated, the distinguishing characteristic of the Spanish *gra-*

*cioso*, and of his descendant who first appears in French comedy as the Jodelet of Scarron. To the story taken from the *Roman Comique*, Holberg has appended a travesty such as Jodelet might easily have acted. *Invisible Lovers* is thus a combination of two naturally associated elements. Though both are found in the work of Scarron, they are, in spirit at least, ultimately Spanish. Amusing as Holberg's play is now and then, it must be regarded as a rather unsuccessful experiment.\*

Holberg's knowledge of miscellaneous French works did not modify either systematically or fundamentally the method formed largely by Molière and the *commedia dell' arte*. To general comic and satiric traditions of French literature he sometimes adhered. When he borrowed more in detail, he either transformed his material, or he experimented in the manner of authors who were unable to aid him in the attainment of his own definitely conceived satiric ideals. The extension of our knowledge of Holberg's sources of inspiration ought by no means to diminish our respect for his originality. Although the tools with which he constructed his dramatic edifice prove to have been borrowed, he remains none the less an independent workman. He always adhered to his own dramatic purpose,—that of writing moral satires of the Danish society which he knew.





## HOLBERG AND ENGLISH LITERATURE



## CHAPTER VI

### HOLBERG AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

**A**LTHOUGH Holberg's knowledge of French literature was undeniably extensive, it was, in a sense, less intimate and vital than his knowledge of English literature. He learned to understand French life by reading French books in Paris, while he "thirsted like a Tantalus for society." His knowledge of English life, on the contrary, was obtained through happy association with friends of his own age at Oxford. Indeed, his acquaintance with English literature seems to have been but one of the results of his enthusiastic participation in the diversions of his fellow students. The comparatively long period which he spent in England, at an impressionable age, absorbing English culture in the most direct ways, fell in the midst of a time of unusual significance in politics and literature. During the early years of the eighteenth century, England was forging ahead of the rest of Europe in liberal thought and literary invention. It would have been surprising, therefore, if the mind of the Norwegian youth had not been greatly stimulated by its first contact with English ideas.

Yet the account given in Holberg's autobiography of these important years is very unsatisfactory. He treats his entire visit to England as a rather hare-

brained, youthful escapade. He tells us that he and a Danish friend, Christian Brix, after landing at Gravesend, went on foot to London. Even on this journey he knew enough English to manage their affairs and to serve his friend as interpreter. From London they went almost directly to Oxford, where without delay they observed the formalities necessary for gaining access to the Bodleian. "As soon as we had registered in the university, all our thoughts were occupied, not so much with copying and collating manuscripts, as with relieving our actual want. My companion wished to teach music, and I, language; but he, God knows, was no more an Orpheus than I a Varro. We derived, therefore, but little benefit from those arts in a community where people are not satisfied with the mere shell of things, but are accustomed to demand the kernel. Consequently, we lived in Oxford for three months so economically that we ate meat only once every four days; on the other days we had to be satisfied with bread and cheese." This enforced economy in food reduced his companion to such a pitiful state that the two went up to London to raise some money. After Brix had obtained funds on the security of a Norwegian friend, they stayed in London for a month, doing nothing, according to Holberg, but eat. Then, when Brix had acquired the paunch of an alderman, they returned to Oxford.

“When we were again in Oxford,” Holberg continues, “we abandoned our former solitary way of living and took up quarters in a tavern which was especially frequented by Oxford students. There we quickly became acquainted with many of them and with some we became good friends.” This inn seemed a grossly objectionable place of residence to one of their Scotch friends, who insisted, quite properly, that a tavern was no fit dwelling; but there the Danish youths continued to live, and Holberg, apparently to justify his strange quarters, at this point breaks out into long, enthusiastic praise of the decorum and sobriety of the undergraduates,—an account, be it said, strangely at variance with contemporary English descriptions of their life.

“We had a merry time of it for a month after our return to Oxford,” remarks Holberg. But at the end of that time, his friend Brix was summoned back to London and he was left alone “in a state of anxiety and perplexity.” “My one comfort in my abandoned and difficult situation,” he adds, “was the friendship that I had recently formed with some Oxford students. They continually eulogized my learning and good qualities and talked of my skill in foreign languages and music.” His friends were in this way giving him professional advertising, for Holberg evidently made his living by tutoring in these two subjects. His skill as a flute-

player seems to have made the greatest impression. He tells with great pride how he was finally admitted to the Musical Club, an association of amateurs, who gave a concert every Wednesday. "In this manner I passed fifteen months, after my friend had left me. During all this time I lived well, even sumptuously, for almost every day I was invited to dine at midday and in the evening with my fellow students, or, as they call it at Oxford, 'take common' [*sic*]. . . . I confess that I am indebted to Oxonians in many ways. I can mention among other proofs of their kindness and generosity toward me the fact that when I had been in Oxford almost two years and was thinking of going home, a student of Magdalen College came and asked leave to talk confidentially with me. He then begged me to tell him quite frankly just what the state of my finances was and promised me in the name of the entire College a considerable sum of money to defray the expenses of my journey." Although Holberg did not need to accept this generous offer, it is, nevertheless, a striking proof of his popularity.

The mention of this act of generosity leads Holberg to a short discussion of both the good and the bad qualities of Englishmen, with particular reference to the impression he made upon his English acquaintances. Of peculiar interest, from the point of view of his later drama, are his remarks about

the art of disputation at Oxford. "They admired my ready wit in parrying and answering every verbal onslaught," he writes, "because the English are not very well skilled in the art of disputation. . . . Continental nations devote their attention entirely to polemics . . . and create so many systems and learned journals that, with their aid, they gain the appearance of possessing information about everything. The English, on the contrary, go to the bottom of things and therefore make slow progress; they are learned before they seem to be. In my own estimation, I spoke Latin haltingly and with difficulty; but the English thought that I spoke fluently and well. They give so little attention to that exercise, indeed, that, of all those that I met at that time, Doctor Smalridge was the only one who spoke even tolerable Latin. Not even Hudson, the librarian, who was considered one of the most distinguished philologists of his time, spoke the language well. The students at Oxford, to be sure, do hold public disputations, but they proceed so awkwardly that as soon as they see a strange face they begin to shake and perspire. Presently they come to a halt and break off the thread of their discourse entirely for shame of the stranger, who, they think, has come, not to listen, but to ridicule."

Formal disputation was, nevertheless, an academic exercise rigorously required of all undergradu-

ates at Oxford at that time. Amhurst, in his *Terrae Filius*,\* burlesques one of these mighty exercises; and in this travesty appear many of the set phrases which Erasmus Montanus loved so much to mouth, — “probo minorem,” “negatur minor,” “distinguendum est ad tuam probationem.” Yet at Oxford no one seemed to take the disputations seriously. Students inherited syllogistic strings which enabled them to go through the perfunctory public disputation with the appearance of mastery. The sensible English attitude toward this outworn mediaeval custom may have confirmed Holberg in his disgust for the Continental passion for it. His years in Oxford may thus have played an important part in establishing a mental attitude which expresses itself in the satire of *Erasmus Montanus*.

“At length I left Oxford,” Holberg continues, “and returned to London, where I sedulously went to see everything that could be seen for nothing.” He gives us no further account of his stay in London, except a circumstantial narrative of the conduct of a friend’s dog at an Anabaptist ceremony. This dog, it seems, almost jumped into a baptismal font to retrieve a woman who was being immersed. After exhausting the humour of the incident, Holberg concludes: “At length I boarded a Swedish ship, and, after a voyage of five days, landed safely and in good condition at Elsinore, whence I walked to Copenhagen.”



Holberg's account of his stay in England is most disappointing to a literary historian who is eager to know just what effect his sojourn there had upon his intellectual and literary development; but it is not necessary to invent elaborate and subtle reasons to explain the flippant tone of his narrative. It is hardly likely that he sedulously avoided a serious consideration of English life in his autobiography because, as has been suggested, the relations between England and Denmark were not very cordial in 1726, or because Frederik IV had never been to England and so would have been bored by hearing much about it.\* As a matter of fact, Holberg does not tell much less of his stay in England than he does of his more recent visits to France and Italy. He was not a romantic poet, who believed that all the incidents in the history of his soul during his childhood and youth were of interest and importance to the world. His first Autobiographical Epistle is not a Wordsworthian *Prelude*. He describes his youth, as any humanist might, whimsically and indulgently. Until one attributes tremendous, hidden purposes to his autobiography, one finds it thoroughly natural. The author writes as most Englishmen and Americans of middle age talk of their college years.

Fortunately, Holberg affords us, in documents more worthy of consideration than a light-hearted series of reminiscences, abundant proof of his admira-

tion for English life and thought. In January, 1714, he wrote a letter to the Danish king, soliciting an appointment to a professorship in the University of Copenhagen. In the enumeration of his qualifications, he gives his residence in Oxford a prominent place. "On my own initiative," he says, "I stayed in England two and a half years, entirely occupied with my studies." In his serious moments, he remembered something besides his social engagements and the antics of his friend's dog in London. In a brief account of his life which he contributed to a short history of Danish literature in 1722, he again emphasizes the importance of his studies at Oxford, and declares that "they lasted two whole years."\* These references to his stay in England, of their nature necessarily slight, were both made a good while before he wrote his first Autobiographical Epistle. They show that when Holberg was not trying to be amusing, he looked back upon his years at Oxford primarily as a time of serious application.

Later in his life, Holberg expresses keen admiration for the conditions that stimulated English men of letters. "In Germany, in France, and especially in England," he says, "where one may say anything that occurs to one, and where genius is bound by no shackles, it is easier to display keenness of judgement and strength of genius than here in the North, where we are plagued by the most rigid cen-

sorship, as a result of which an author's zeal is cooled and the point of his wit blunted. For this reason, even if poets and philosophers were to arise among us capable of rivalling the English, they would scarcely reach maturity."

The habits of English thought he applauds with enthusiasm. He extols Englishmen's candid discussion of religious questions, even if it produced a lamentable impudence in opposing revelation. Their mental processes he really prefers to those of Frenchmen. "The English do not comprehend a thing so quickly as the French," he says, "but they possess better judgement. They talk but little, but what they say is pithy and vital. The French form friendships hastily and as quickly break them; the English form them slowly, but break them just as slowly. The French respect most their superiors; the English, themselves. The former are, therefore, better citizens; the latter, better men."

It is not strange that Holberg should think that men so superior in character should produce superior literature. After showing the esteem in which letters and scholarship are held in England, by citing the extraordinary honours paid to Newton and Bishop Burnet, he concludes: "Since learning is there held in so great honour, it is no wonder that Englishmen have won the foremost place in both learning and literature, two things which have, as it were, taken

up their abode on this island.' This unreserved statement is extremely significant. It means nothing less than that Holberg believed English to be the best of all modern literatures.

Holding such views, Holberg was glad to think that his intellectual nature was like that of the English. He says: 'It is believed in this respect that I have adopted something of the character of Englishmen. In England it used to be said of me, 'He looks as [*sic*] an Englishman.' I pleased them and they pleased me. And, in truth, I seem to be a remarkably faithful copy of them both in manners and in disposition.'

The effect of English thought upon Holberg's historical and philosophical writing has long been recognized. His direct references to English documents are, indeed, largely to books of history and philosophy.\* Yet it must be remembered that the *Epistles*, in which most of such references appear, were written at the end of his life, when his mind was engrossed by philosophical speculation, and works of pure literature are mentioned there almost by chance. As a matter of fact, the literary ideas of English authors exerted as vital an influence upon his essays, satires, and comedies, as upon his other productions. In particular, his comedies, to which this study is confined, appear to owe several of their most distinctive characteristics to English literature.

The contribution of Oxford to the young Dane's knowledge of contemporary English writings must have been slight. During the early years of the eighteenth century, if we may trust the critics of the time, the university was intellectually stagnant. The professors were indolent and made but little pretence of lecturing. The students were zealous only in ogling and toasting women, and in drinking deep potations to the true king over the water. Oxford, indeed, escaped complete intellectual torpor only by her championship of a lost cause. Non-jurors determined the political bias of the place. True, the dons and fellows did nothing more heroic than worrying and persecuting any dog of a Whig who dared to appear among the undergraduates, and nothing more insurgent than listening to sermons in which treason was expressed in transparent ambiguities. Sacheverell's sermons, which, when delivered in London, overthrew a ministry, was the sort of thing that an Oxford congregation expected every Sunday.

Strangely enough, the few traces of Holberg at Oxford that we can discover now, bring him into connection with the non-jurors. Holberg tells us that one of the first of his acts there was to observe the forms necessary for obtaining access to the Bodleian. In the *Liber Peregrinorum Admissorum* of the Library, which all foreigners who used the books between 1683 and 1783 were compelled to sign,

may be seen the oldest authenticated copy of Holberg's signature. The name of his companion appears first, *Christianus Brixius, Nidrosia, Norvegus*, 18 Apr. Anno 1706; and following it, *Ludovicus Holbergius, Norvegus*, 18 Apr. 1706.\* One who studied in the Bodleian as regularly and as sedulously as Holberg † apparently did, would almost surely have become acquainted with the deputy librarian, the antiquary and sturdy non-juror, Thomas Hearne. Just before Holberg and Brix went down to Oxford, a countryman of theirs, named Francis Bacche, had been working in the Library. He had been a friend of Hearne's, and, as is evident from entries in the Englishman's diary, had supplied him with much valued information about Scandinavian scholarship.‡ When he returned to London, he sent Hearne a letter, dated April 6, 1706, in which he expresses his gratitude for the favours he has received from the librarian and promises to send him reports of the progress of letters in the North, in return for such information as Hearne can send him from the "fountain of literature."§ It would have been natural for Bacche to have given his two young countrymen, who went down to Oxford about a week after this letter was written, a note of introduction to his friend Hearne, and this he seems to have done. At any rate, on a fly-leaf of Hearne's almanac for 1706, the following note is written in Holberg's

hand: "For Mr. Francis Bacche, Danish Gentleman at Drammen in Norgue. To be left at the Crown House, near Royal Exchange in London. Støemsøe is a Sea Harbour, as in the maps is called Copperwick." As Olsvig suggests, this note is undoubtedly an explanation of Bacche's various addresses.\*

If Holberg really knew Hearne, he may have been received in the inner circle of the most stubborn of the Oxford non-jurors. Hearne would have been likely to introduce him to Dr. George Hickes, who had been living since 1696 at Gloucester Green. Although Hickes's precious *Thesaurus* had been published two years before Holberg came to England, the elder scholar would have welcomed an acquaintanceship with a young Scandinavian at any time. Holberg could hardly have received from this group many ideas which influenced his comedies.† With their political creed he probably had scant sympathy. Yet association with them would have given him a keen idea of the fierce chauvinism of the non-jurors. No one could have lived at Oxford during the early years of the eighteenth century without realizing the bitterness of English party strife. The absurd screed of Gert Westphaler, Holberg's talkative barber, may well have been Holberg's own satiric comment on the political discussions which he had heard carried on at Oxford. "There are four principal sects in England," explains Gert, "Tories,

Wigs [*sic*], Mannists, and Anabaptists. . . . The Tories are the noblest, and they always take the king's part. They fought for King James when he waged war against the Wighs [*sic*], who rebelled under the leadership of Cromwell," etc.

The direct literary results of Holberg's association with the university were probably meagre. Neither from his convivial evenings with the students nor from his acquaintance with antiquarians could he have gained ideas of importance for a future author of comedy. Such ideas could have been assimilated only during his apparently long sojourns in London. Of course he went to the theatres there. Plays are not "to be seen for nothing," but the theatre is always a favourite resort of lonely strangers in a foreign city, no matter how poor they may be. Besides, Holberg must have possessed, even at that time, a strong interest in the drama. Only such plays as held the stage would have been likely to come to his notice. His almost complete ignorance of Shakespeare can, in this way, be readily explained; for, although a few of Shakespeare's tragedies were played in garbled forms, his comedies were seldom to be seen then in London.\* Holberg, however, dramatizes at least one story that Shakespeare had treated before him.

The plot of *Jeppe of the Hill* is the tale of Christopher Sly. Jeppe, like him, is a peasant who, while



in a drunken stupor, is carried into the castle of a lord, is dressed in fine clothes, and, on awaking, brought to believe himself the grand gentleman that he seems to be. The story, the original version of which is found in *The Arabian Nights*, appears in the work of many European authors besides Shakespeare and Holberg. Seven versions of it occur in Elizabethan literature alone. General similarities between any two versions, therefore, are of no importance. Fortunately, Holberg tells us his exact source. He took the plot, he says, from Biedermann's *Utopia*. A comparison confirms the truth of his statement. Yet the following points in the Danish play, which are not to be found in the *Utopia*, prove to be parts of the history of Christopher Sly: (1) Almost the entire first act of Holberg's comedy is devoted to a dialogue between Jeppe and the host, who urges him to drink until he is overcome. In Shakespeare fourteen lines are devoted to a dialogue between Sly and an irate hostess, which ends when Sly drops into a drunken sleep. No scene of this sort appears in the *Utopia*. (2) Jeppe makes vulgar and downright love to the supposed wife of the man who impersonates the bailiff. "You are pretty!" he exclaims. "Will you sleep with me to-night?" Similarly, Sly importunes the boy who is pretending to be his wife: "Madam, undress you and come now to bed." (3) When Jeppe awakes, after his revel in luxury,

to find himself lying in the barnyard, his first shout is: "Stewards, lackeys, one more glass of sack!" Sly's first remark when he awakes in the lord's bed-chamber is: "For God's sake, a pot of small ale!" And the first servant answers: "Will't please your lordship drink a cup of sack?" These three incidents occur in other versions of the story than Shakespeare's, yet it seems the most natural place for Holberg to have become acquainted with them.\* *The Taming of the Shrew* was performed twice† while he was in England, the first time during July, 1706, when he was almost certainly in London. It is very likely, then, that Christopher Sly's adventure may have suggested to him the idea of dramatizing a story which he already knew from Biedermann. Nowhere else is Shakespeare's influence discernible. As a matter of fact, Holberg's conception of the purpose of comedy and his dramatic practice were both much more like those of Ben Jonson.

Jonson, indeed, is the only Elizabethan dramatist to whom Holberg makes direct reference. "In certain sorts of comedy," he says, "the ridicule is aimed at no country or society in particular, but is directed against the world in general. For this reason, the comedies of the Englishman, Ben Jonson, and of Molière, and also Hans Mikkelsen's heroic poem, are the most honourable and innocent of satires. They castigate and amuse at the same time, and censure

not one, but all faults, not those of one country, but those of all mankind.” \* This statement is of peculiar importance because it was made in 1722, the very year in which Holberg began to produce his comedies with startling rapidity. It is further significant because he links Jonson’s name with that of Molière.

*Volpone*, *The Silent Woman*, and *Bartholomew Fair* were all produced while Holberg was in England. † Whether he saw them on the stage or only heard them discussed, they might readily have stimulated him to become familiar with a dramatist whose spirit, he thought, was not unlike his own. The similarities between the work of the two men in plot or details of dramatic device are negligible. The real likenesses are to be sought, where Holberg himself suggests, in the general character of the satire. Jonson’s well-known definition of a “humour” describes the mental obsession of the central figures in almost all of Holberg’s comedies of character:

As when some one peculiar quality  
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw  
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers  
In their confluxions, all to run one way.

Holberg’s characters are helpless in the grip of one peculiar quality. In *The Busy Man*, Vielgeschrey’s humour is to believe that he is overwhelmed with work; in *Honourable Ambition*, Jeronimus’s humour

is an insensate desire to get a title ; Gert Westphaler's humour is an uncontrollable desire to talk ; the humour of Erasmus Montanus is a no less impetuous desire to display his skill in scholastic disputation ; in *The Fickle-minded Woman*, Lucretia's humour is an incessant indulgence in the woman's privilege of changing her mind ; and Don Ranudo's humour is his pride of family. These figures, like those of Jonson, run the risk of being crushed out of real human semblance under the emphasis placed upon a single odd trait.\* No other writer whom Holberg knew conceived comic character so much in his manner. Holberg is like Molière in showing his characters dominated by one peculiarity, but he is like Jonson alone in permitting it to assume the force of monomania.

Holberg and Jonson, furthermore, had the same general conception of the proper function of a plot. They both believed that almost its sole duty was to exhibit various aspects of the slavery of an individual to a single dominating characteristic. Jonson invariably presents this humour to his audiences in a similar way. Before the central figures appear upon the stage, someone describes minutely the manner in which they act under the compulsion of their humour. After their entrance, therefore, they have nothing to do, as Mr. William Archer cleverly says, "but, as it were, copy their own portraits."† Hol-

berg's "humour" figure is almost always preceded by an explanatory description like those in Jonson.\* It has no sooner been completed, usually by one of the roguish servants, than the character himself begins to copy his portrait with astonishing fidelity to the words of his zany.

The appearance of the central character, to be sure, is likewise anticipated in Molière. Yet the latter's method is more subtle. He rather establishes the situation of which the comic hero is to be a part, and the states of mind which he has created in the other characters, than anticipates the central figure's every action by minute description. Instead of deadening our curiosity by preliminary verbal portraiture, he is at pains to stimulate it. Tartuffe's actions, for example, have much of the surprise of novelty. The actions of the "humour" figures of both Jonson and Holberg surprise us only by the extraordinary manner in which they do the things we have been told to expect. Our foreknowledge of them, we discover, is a kind of foreordination. The relation of these comic heroes to the antecedent description of them is more mechanical and minute than that in Molière and for that reason demands their more immediate appearance. The essential features of this relation between portrait and subject appear again and again in Holberg. In *The Fickle-minded Woman*, for example, in the fifth scene of the first act, Henrich

devotes a long monologue to a description of his mistress Lucretia. In a dialogue between him and Petronius which follows, this description is expanded and illustrated. Then in the eighth scene of the same act, Lucretia promptly appears and behaves exactly as Henrich had said that she would. The nature of figures described in a manner thus stereotyped and final had of necessity to be one-sided and humorous.

These ready-made grotesques of both Jonson and Holberg can undergo but one sort of development. They can be expelled violently and abruptly from their humours. The object of the dramatic action of both writers thus of necessity became to drive "every man out of his humour;" and the methods of both in attaining this simple object were very similar. To paraphrase Miss Woodbridge's able analysis of Jonson's method, one might say that his *dramatis personae* can always be divided into two groups, a large group of victims and a small group of victimizers. Inasmuch as his sturdy belief was that comedy should be "such a scornful presentation of folly or vice as might deter men from falling into like errors," his victims present us the follies or vices chosen for castigation; the victimizers exploit these faults until they can be brought to their natural end in exposure or ruin. The plots of Jonson's plays, therefore, become a mere series of practical jokes, devised by the "mischievously or

malignantly active" victimizers, to be played upon the "more or less helplessly passive" victims. The play ends when the victims, convinced of the folly of their humours, abandon them.

Holberg's methods of construction are, in general, much like those of Jonson. His characters, too, are divided into the two groups, victims and victimizers. The first group, however, is diminished to one person. This reduction is valuable dramatic economy. Jonson is forced to devise a plot for each one of his eccentric figures that will first display his peculiar habit of mind and then suppress it. Holberg has to invent but one series of tricks. His plays, therefore, have less surface complexity; they seem less a collection of monstrosities brought together by a designing author. Furthermore, having but one "humour" character to exploit, Holberg could give him a definite social setting. He learned from Molière how to contrast his central character with the sane members of a bourgeois family. His principal figures, therefore, do not seem, like those of Jonson, dragged forth into the limelight by the dramatist's zeal. They are made at home in a very real world before the victimizers begin their stratagems. Holberg found his group of victimizers already formed for him in the servants of the *commedia dell'arte*. Here, as in the work of both Plautus and Terence, the merely exuberant tricks of the

zanies are ostensibly executed for the definite purpose of accomplishing the marriage of the *amoruso* with the *amorosa*. Holberg, in retaining this plausible motive for the deceit of his servants, gives their action some superficial probability. The dramatic value of Henrich, Pernille, and the rest really lies in the part that they play in forcing the "humour" figure to display his follies. Yet their interest in the lovers, whom those follies are keeping apart, gives their intrigues a more reasonable animating force than sheer envy or moral zeal.

In these ways Holberg modified Jonson's methods to advantage. Some of the blemishes in his work are defects inherent in the type. In proportion as the humour portrayed is a mere mannerism, the comedy deteriorates into farce. Jonson did not avoid this danger. The action of *Epicoene*, for example, becomes farcical because Morose's single characteristic is nothing less accidental than mere aversion to noise. Similarly, the repeated exhibition of Gert Westphaler's talkativeness, or even of Rasmus Berg's worship of academic disputation, soon becomes utter nonsense. Moreover, the lack of development in Holberg's comic heroes in the course of a play is inherent in the nature of "humour" figures. By definition they have but one mental trait. They must be displayed in all the crude completeness of their obsession until they become convinced of the



folly of their "humour;" then they will abruptly discard it. It is all or nothing with such figures; and their all cannot become nothing by nice gradations. Holberg's servants, too, undergo no real development; but their rigidity is due to a different cause. Henrich, Pernille, and Arv fail to develop because they are descendants of Italian figures whose natures were unalterably fixed at their first appearance by their costumes; his Jeronimuses, Erasmuses, and Gerts fail similarly, because they are essentially "humour" characters.

It is, of course, possible to assert that the general similarities in the methods of the two dramatists are not so much the result of Holberg's actual study of Jonson as of a natural intellectual kinship between the two men; but, as a matter of fact, Holberg's comic temper is not fundamentally like that of Jonson. He preaches most often on the text, "Don't be a fool;" Jonson on the text, "Don't be a knave." He has not, like the Englishman, an "armed and resolved hand" "to strip the ragged follies of the time" and "lash them with a whip of steel." Jonson is full of *saeva indignatio*; Holberg of amused *humanitas*. And this comic temper of Holberg is related, we shall find, to that of one of the greatest of English humanists. It seems, therefore, more probable that Holberg's likenesses to Jonson are the result of conscious imitation.

Of Restoration comedy in its broadest sense, that which remained faithful to the principles of Jonson is most clearly related to Holberg's work. Even when the popularity of the school of Etherege and Congreve was at its height, there were authors who continued to write in the manner of Jonson. Men like Shadwell did English literature a service of lasting value by preventing comedy from committing itself unequivocally to the portrayal of the artificial life of a coterie. But it was not until the early years of the eighteenth century that the revolt against this sort of comedy assumed the proportions of a definite literary tendency. The reaction manifested itself in two ways: first, in the invention of the so-called sentimental comedy; secondly, in a revival of interest in Jonsonian drama. Jonson's own plays were frequently presented; Shadwell enjoyed a new popularity; and Steele, even in his sentimental comedies, expended much of his dramatic effort on the delineation of characters which may fairly be called "humorous." In *The Tender Husband*, for example, Biddy Tipkin, whose head has been turned by an over-zealous reading of romances, her maiden aunt, and Humphrey Gubbin, the obvious prototype of Tony Lumpkin, are all figures of this sort. It was George Farquhar, however, who gave the most vital and original expression to the liberating movement. His work belongs to the Jonsonian tradition, not so

much because it is "humour" comedy, as because it portrays the great world of England completely beyond the influence of London society. The larger scope of his comic interest is shown most clearly in his last two plays, *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Beaux' Stratagem*, produced for the first time in 1706 and 1707 respectively. In these comedies, as Mr. William Archer says, "Farquhar introduced us to the life of the inn, the market-place, and the manor-house. He showed us the squire, the justice, the inn-keeper, the highwayman, the recruiting sergeant, the charitable lady, the country belle, the chambermaid, and half a score of excellent rustic types. He introduced the picaresque element into English comedy, along with a note of sincere and original observation." \*

Almost every word of this criticism of Farquhar applies equally well to the sort of plays that Holberg wrote. It was precisely this extensive range in his original observation that distinguishes his work sharply from that of Molière. In no dramatist of the Continent whom Holberg had read, could he have found a similar attempt to make the scope of comedy truly national. Farquhar may well have inspired all his efforts to make the bounds of his own work as wide as Denmark itself; and we know that he was well acquainted with some of Farquhar's dramas. He not only refers directly to *The Recruit-*

*ing Officer*, a play which was performed during his stay in England, but he makes Kite's device for impressing Costar Pearmain and Thomas Appleton serve as the *dénouement* of *Erasmus Montanus*.<sup>\*</sup> Holberg clearly returned to Denmark with an accurate memory of at least one of Farquhar's plays; and the nature of his own production makes it probable that it was not so much the mere plot of *The Recruiting Officer* that he admired, as the general character of Farquhar's art and method. It is not perhaps too much to say that Holberg consciously performed the same service for Denmark that Englishmen like Farquhar began to perform for England in the early eighteenth century.

For the comedy against which the works of Farquhar were in part a revolt (that is, for the comedy of men like Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve) Holberg had scant respect. In his Epistle No. 241, he states that when the National Theatre reopened, he read for a second time a number of English comedies to see if any of them were suitable for the Danish stage. He found them, he says, "too obscure and too full of difficult and high-flown expressions, which at first glance one cannot understand. Instead of saying, for example, 'She hates him like death,' they say, 'She hates him worse than a Quaker hates a parrot, or than a fishmonger hates a hard frost.' Instead of saying, 'They

scolded and sputtered at each other,' they say, 'Sputtering at each other like two roasting apples.''' The examples are both taken from the speeches of Witwoud in Congreve's *The Way of the World*. Holberg's choice of these purposely laboured comparisons for censure shows how completely he failed to understand Congreve's satire of a spurious wit in Witwoud. The subtle characterization and the verbal jesting of the best Restoration drama naturally escaped a foreigner. Such plays would seem to him, as he remarks elsewhere, "to lack that festive nature which is the very soul of comedy."

Holberg's work is absolutely unlike this sort of comedy. The tone of Restoration drama is at the best unmoral; the tone of his plays is confessedly moral and didactic. The ridicule of the one is directed against the coterie, a charmed social set; of the other, against peasants and middle-class citizens. The one is comedy of dialogue, of interchange of wit; the other of situation, of hearty humour. The one is full of the obscenity of rakes and debauchees; the other of the coarseness of full-blooded countrymen. The satire of one is exquisite and delicate to the vanishing-point; that of the other is insistent and obvious to the point of tedium. Restoration comedy concerns profligate manners; Holberg's is moral comedy of character.

In spite of these essential and fundamental dif-

ferences between the two sorts of drama, certain minor and insignificant similarities between them have been suggested. Holberg often ends his plays with some doggerel in which the moral lesson of the action is made clear to the spectators. These verses usually begin with some such line as, "From this our play, we can observe and learn;" or "From this adventure, we, courteous sirs, may learn." \* The authors of Restoration comedy had a similar dramatic mannerism. Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and even Shadwell, Steele, and Cibber, usually close their prose comedies with a bit of doggerel verse. Like the similar rhyme tags in Elizabethan drama, it serves merely as rhetorical punctuation, a *plaudite*. The concluding lines of Etherege's *Sir Fopling Flutter* answer this purpose. There old Bellair turns to the pit and says:

And if these honest gentlemen rejoice,  
Adod, the boy has made a happy choice.

Congreve alone of the Restoration comic writers consistently makes his tags like those of Holberg, a moral sign-post upon which to scrawl the lesson to be learned from the action just completed. The doggerel at the end of both *The Double Dealer* and *The Way of the World* is of this ostensibly edifying sort. "Let secret villainy from hence be warned" begins the rhyme appended to the first of the two

plays ; and after the careless, unmoral frivolities of *The Way of the World*, we are addressed as follows :

From hence let those be warned who mean to wed ;  
Lest mutual falsehood stain the marriage-bed ;  
For each deceiver to his cost may find,  
That marriage frauds too oft are paid in kind.

Holberg's moral verses were perhaps his adaptations of Congreve's doggerel maxims of worldly prudence.

On the whole, however, Holberg's work is radically different from English Restoration drama and owes little to it. To sentimental comedy, such as was written by Cibber and Steele, Holberg was constitutionally hostile. I have already mentioned his scorn of the derived sentimental plays of Destouches. A writer intent upon provoking the maximum of laughter naturally had little in common with dramatists whose primary assumption was that their audiences wanted to cry. Yet Holberg's audiences would have responded readily to the appeal of sentimental drama. He himself tells us that they were often reduced to tears by his *Melampe*. The mock-heroic expression of the farcical emotion which Philocyne felt for her lost dog seemed to them deeply affecting. How easily a dramatist might have exploited tears as ready as these ! Yet Holberg never once forsook his reasonable humanism for shallow appeals to superficial emotion.

The influences of English conceptions of drama upon Holberg's art above mentioned are, one must confess, not demonstrable. Yet the absence of similarities of detail between his work and English comedy ought not to bring into serious doubt the fundamental relation between the two. The dependence of the intellectual attitude of one man upon that of another can hardly be established by direct evidence. Fortunately, the circumstantial evidence so far adduced to prove this intangible influence is, I believe, corroborated by direct evidence of the influence of certain non-dramatic English literature upon his comedies. Some of the essays in *The Tatler* probably suggested to Holberg the plots of *The Political Tinker*.

In this play, Hermann von Bremen, an honest tinker of Hamburg, has become absorbed in politics, to the neglect of all his normal duties. The first act shows us the complications that his infatuation has produced. It opens with a conversation between Antonius, the lover of Hermann's daughter, and Henrich, the tinker's roguish servant. From the latter Antonius learns that he has no chance of gaining Hermann's consent to his marriage, unless he address him in a petition couched in the most formal diplomatic language. While the lover is pondering over this disconcerting piece of news, the tinker enters and confirms his servant's words by refusing



to consider Antonius as a son-in-law unless he will agree to devote his life to a study of politics, — a subject best mastered, he thinks, by reading certain German manuals, particularly one entitled *The Political Dessert*. Antonius refuses the demand and is contemptuously dismissed. Then Geske, the tinker's wife, enters. Her naturally high temper has been made shrewish by her husband's neglect of business. She tries desperately to pacify customers who find pots and pans left weeks ago still unmended. After they have gone off grumbling, Henrich takes occasion to describe the club of which Hermann is a member. The twelve artisans who have formed what they call a *Collegium Politicum* are to meet on this particular night at Hermann's house.

The second act is devoted to this meeting of the *Collegium Politicum*.\* The tradesmen enter solemnly to take their seats around a table covered with mugs of ale and long tobacco-pipes. "Where was it that we stopped last time?" begins Hermann, who appears to be the presiding officer. "With the interests of Germany," replies Richard Brushmaker. Then they begin to make all sorts of absurd political proposals. They find it ridiculous that Vienna has no fleet in its harbour, when there are so many good pine trees in Austria and Prague. A suggestion that Paris ought to have a similar fleet drives the politicians to consult an atlas. Even then they are un-

able to decide with unanimity whether the city is a seaport or not. A shrewish interruption by Geske at this point leads one of the radical members to propose that marriage be made a mere contract, binding only for a stated term of years. After this excursion into the domain of private law, some one brings in the last copy of a newspaper, in order to keep the discussion practical. One of the members, therefore, begins to read the vapid conjectures which passed for news in those days. "Word comes from the chief camp on the Rhine," he reads, "that recruits are expected. . . . It is reported from Italy that Prince Eugene has broken camp, traversed the river Padus." These pieces of information rouse the artisans to violent expressions of opinion. "Oh, oh!" exclaims Hermann, "his Highness is stricken with blindness! We are done for! I would n't give fourpence for the whole army in Italy." The furrier agrees vehemently with the military strategy of Eugene, and the meeting breaks up in a heated discussion in which all the members of the *Collegium Politicum* participate.

The first two acts thus contain Holberg's customary exposition of the character of the central figure as it appears in the midst of his definitely established peasant family. The remaining acts are devoted to the invention and the execution of an elaborate hoax intended to convince Hermann that

his political assumptions are supremely foolish. Two gentlemen of Hamburg, having decided that the tinker's pretensions would vanish were he given a shadow of political responsibility, persuade him that he has been chosen Mayor of Hamburg. Hermann's ludicrous attempts to master the social usages befitting his exalted station, and his complete failure to decide some legal questions which are fabricated for him to answer, cure him of his desire to meddle in politics. After gladly promising his daughter to Antonius, he ends the play by exclaiming to Heinrich: "Burn up all my political books! I cannot bear to see the things that have brought me to such folly."

Though the fact has not, I believe, been noted before, it is clear that the situation described in the first part of this comedy was suggested by the story of the political upholsterer who is satirized in *The Tatler*, Nos. 155, 160, and 178, as follows:

"There lived some years since within my neighbourhood a very grave person, an upholsterer, who seemed a man of more than ordinary application to business. . . . Upon my inquiry into his life and conversation, I found him to be the greatest news-monger in our quarter. . . . He had a wife and several children; but was much more inquisitive to know what passed in Poland than in his own family, and was in greater pain and anxiety for King Augus-

tus's welfare than that of his nearest relations. . . . This indefatigable kind of life was the ruin of his shop, for about the time that his favourite prince left the crown of Poland, he broke and disappeared.

“This man and his affairs had been long out of my mind, till about three days ago, as I was walking in St. James's Park, I heard somebody at a distance hemming after me: and who should it be but my old neighbour the upholsterer! . . . Upon his coming up to me, I was going to inquire into his present circumstances; but was prevented by his asking me, with a whisper, whether the last letters brought any accounts that one might rely on from Bender. I told him that I had n't heard of any, and asked him whether he had yet married his eldest daughter. He told me No. ‘But pray,’ says he, ‘tell me sincerely what are your thoughts of the King of Sweden?’ For though his wife and children were starving, I found his chief concern at present was for this great monarch. . . . We were now got to the upper end of the Mall, where were three or four very odd fellows sitting together upon the bench. These I found were all of them politicians, who used to sun themselves in that place about dinner time.

“The unfortunate tradesman had for years past been the chief orator in ragged assemblies, and the reader in alley coffee-houses. He was surrounded by

an audience of that sort, among whom I sat unobserved through the favour of a cloud of tobacco, and saw him with *The Postman* in his hand, and all the other papers safe under his left elbow. He was intermixing remarks and reading the Paris article of May 30, which says that it is given out that an express arrived this day with advice that the armies were so near in the plain of Lens that they cannonaded each other. ('Ay, ay, here we shall have sport.') And that it was highly probable that the next express would bring us an account of an engagement. ('They are welcome as soon as they please.') Though some others say that the same will be put off till the 2nd or 3rd of June, because the Marshal Villars expects some further reinforcements from Germany, and other parts, before that time. ('What-a-pox does he put it off for? Does he think our horse is not marching up at the same time? But let us see what he says further.')

The general conception of this character is like that of Hermann of Bremen in several respects. The political upholsterer, like the Danish tinker, has devoted himself to political vapouring until he has neglected his business, reduced his family to poverty, and refused to allow his daughter to marry the man of her choice. The English politician belongs to a club of three or four queer fellows, who meet upon the benches in the park to discuss world politics;

the political tinker belongs to a club of craftsmen, pretentiously named *Collegium Politicum*, who meet at the houses of the various members, also to discuss world politics. The upholsterer reads foreign news to his fellow members and from time to time makes caustic comment and bitter criticism, particularly on the conduct of a foreign war; in the same way, Richard Brushmaker reads the political news from the most recent newspaper to the assembled *Collegium Politicum*; and the would-be politicians interrupt him with comment of exactly the same sort that the political upholsterer utters. Not only are the general situations at this point in the two satires practically identical, but the news is also of the same sort; the politician's comments are of the same solemnly stupid tenor; and the implied satire of the news-sheets is of like nature. A comparison of the essays in *The Tatler* with the first two acts of *The Political Tinker* makes it almost certain, then, that the character of Hermann of Bremen was suggested by that of the political upholsterer, and the famous *Collegium Politicum* by the strange assembly in St. James's Park.

Another essay in *The Tatler* may have suggested the general situation of *Erasmus Montanus*.<sup>\*</sup> The following extract from that essay is the part significant for our purpose: "I remember a young gentleman of moderate understanding and great viva-

city, who by dipping into many modish French authors had got a little smattering of knowledge, just enough to make an atheist or a free-thinker, but not a philosopher or a man of sense. With these accomplishments, he went to visit his father in the country, who was a plain, rough, honest man, and wise though not learned. The son, who took all opportunities to show his learning, began to establish a new religion in the family, and to enlarge the narrowness of their country notions. Finally he said that he did not question but his dog Tray was as immortal as any one of the family. . . . Upon which the old man, starting up in a very great passion, and taking his cane in his hand, cudgelled him out of his system."

Some similarities between this tale and the plot of *Erasmus Montanus*, as reviewed in a previous chapter, undoubtedly exist. The fundamental idea in both satires is the same. A youth who has acquired in the intellectual centre of the nation a little knowledge and a great opinion of its worth, is sent back to visit his family in the country. There his ill-digested ideas come into sharp conflict with the traditions and common sense of the countryside. The result of the conflict is that his stubbornly held heresies are cudgelled out of him, in one case by his father, in the other by a recruiting officer. The similarity between the dramatic situation and the Eng-

lish anecdote is, of course, much less striking and conclusive in this case than in that of *The Political Tinker*. Yet the convincing nature of this latter relation adds to the probability of the former. The definite knowledge of these essays, which Holberg shows, is important, however, not merely for its own sake, but for its larger significance in making it probable that the subjects which Holberg chose to satirize and the very essence of his satiric attitude were profoundly influenced by a sympathetic study of the English periodicals.

Now we know, from frequent direct references, that when Holberg composed his *Epistles*, he was thoroughly familiar with the English papers. But is there any external evidence tending to corroborate the fact, which the plot of *The Political Tinker* seems to establish, that Holberg had read *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* before he began to write his comedies? The probabilities of such an acquaintance are, of course, exceedingly strong. A man with so many English friends as Holberg evidently had when he left Oxford, possessing besides so keen an interest in English literature, would inevitably have been informed almost immediately of the appearance of the remarkably popular *Tatler* and *Spectator*. He would for these reasons have been as likely as any man on the Continent to find means of reading them as soon as possible.\* One is, indeed, prompted to make an



obscure statement in Holberg's first Autobiographical Epistle refer definitely to a reading of these essays. Speaking of a time when he suffered from ill health,—which, by a simple process of elimination, can be fixed as the years 1716–18,—he says: “For two whole years I was afflicted with pains in the head. . . . During that time I read nothing but histories and journals [*Ephemerides*]. But when the two years were over . . . I composed my heroic poem, together with my satires and comedies.” Whatever these *Ephemerides* were, if Holberg turned almost directly from a reading of them to the composition of his comedies, they would be very apt to have some influence upon the plays. It is tempting to conjecture that these *Ephemerides* were the English periodicals.\* To what other literary productions of the time could the word so appropriately refer? It would have been absurd to apply it to the learned discussions of theology and scholarship which appeared in Thomasius's *Monatsgespräche*. Although it would have fitly described *Der Vernünftler*, the first German adaptation of *The Spectator*, made in Hamburg in 1713, this paper had so little influence in its day that it was forgotten altogether by scholars until a few years ago.

If Holberg had regarded Addison as the principal author of the papers, his interest in them would probably have been quickened by that fact, for Addi-

son was one of the writers in whom he would almost surely have become interested during his stay in England. In 1704, by publishing *The Campaign*, Addison had become a national figure. And at Oxford, above all places, his name must have been continually mentioned during the very year that Holberg was there. The university that encouraged and developed his poetic talent must have felt a peculiar sense of possession in his work. At Oxford, in 1693, Addison had published his *Account of the Greatest English Poets*. In 1699, he had issued his Latin poems as the second volume of *Musae Anglicanae*. In 1706, the year in which Holberg went to Oxford, Addison had just added to his reputation by producing his opera *Rosamund*. The young foreigner would surely have listened eagerly to all that Oxford could tell him about Joseph Addison.

Information, both enthusiastic and reliable, Holberg could have received from at least one person at the university. The poet's younger brother, Launcelot Addison, who was made a Fellow of Magdalen College in 1706, was in Oxford during the entire time that he was there. It is interesting to recall in this connection Holberg's statement that when he was leaving Oxford, a student of Magdalen College approached him and in the name of the entire college offered him a sum of money large enough to pay the expenses of his journey back to Scandinavia.

This offer shows that Holberg's connection with Magdalen was particularly close. It is by no means improbable, therefore, that Holberg knew Launcelot Addison.

Nowhere in his work does Holberg refer to Joseph Addison by name, yet he makes one significant indirect reference to him. In his Epistle No. 512, which is a dream-vision, he says: "I thought that I had come into the dwellings of the dead and the first to meet me was the English Spectator, whom I had seen in my youth in London and plainly recognized again. . . . 'Tell me, my dear friend,' " etc. If these words mean anything, they mean that Holberg had seen Steele or Addison, and much more probably the latter, when he was in London. His salutation, *Kjaere*, even if it fails definitely to establish personal acquaintance, does prove his admiration for the literary achievements of the authors of *The Spectator*.

The few bits of external evidence here adduced tend to explain that early familiarity with certain papers in *The Tatler* which the plot of *The Political Tinker* shows Holberg to have possessed. The really significant result of this knowledge, however, is not the one or two dramatic situations which the essays may have suggested to Holberg. It is rather the valuable contribution they seem to have made to his urbane satiric and moral attitude. The ethical intention of Holberg's comedies is the quality that he

himself is most prone to emphasize as of primary importance. He is at great pains to describe his plays again and again as "moral comedies." He preaches, both through the ridicule that he heaps upon his comic heroes, and through the incidental essays that he puts into the mouths of his characters. Critics have more than once found this permeating didacticism a dramatic blemish.\* The virtues which Holberg seeks to inculcate are not, however, of a sort to produce a saint, or even a fundamentally upright man. They are rather such as would grace any sensible member of society. His moral interests are almost identical with those of the authors of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* when they assume a humanistic attitude. To the large number of sentimental essays among these papers, Holberg's critical attitude is diametrically opposed. Holberg, moreover, not only adopts the humanistic critical attitude that the English authors assume towards life, but he also satirizes identically the same foibles as they. The following parallels are designed to show, then, not so much direct sources for individual dramatic ideas, as significant similarity in two critical points of view.

In the early numbers of *The Tatler*, the foolish affection which women lavish upon lapdogs is at least three times held up to ridicule.† *Tatler* No. 47, for example, which is apparently veiled satire

of the extravagant efforts made by the Duchess of Montague to find a lost dog, has the following characteristic passage: "A misfortune proper for me to take notice of, has too lately happened: the disconsolate Maria has three days kept her chamber for the loss of the beauteous Fidelia, her lapdog. Lesbia herself did not shed more tears for her sparrow. What makes her the more concerned is that we know not whether Fidelia was killed or stolen." Holberg devotes an entire play, *Melampe*, to ridicule of this affection for dogs. Philocyne, like Maria, has lost her dog Melampe, and does not know whether it has been killed or merely stolen. She has the animal cried, and, failing to find it by this method, gives way to violent grief. The play develops, to be sure, into a mock-heroic poem, in which two sisters and their lover fight for possession of the pet in absurd warfare. The conflict ends only when a brother of the warring sisters kills the dog. It is evident that Holberg in this case has ridiculed the same social folly as the English essayist and in much the same spirit.

*Tatler* No. 264 satirizes, in particular, prolix talkers, who are said to be even more insufferable than prolix writers. "This evil is at present so very common and epidemical," declares the author, "that there is scarce a coffee-house in town that has not some speakers belonging to it who utter their

political essays and draw their parallels out of *Baker's Chronical* to almost every part of her Majesty's reign. . . . But it is not only public places of resort, but private clubs and conversations over a bottle that are infested with this loquacious kind of animal. . . . What makes this evil the much greater in conversation is that these humdrum companions seldom endeavour to wind up their narrative into a point of mirth or instruction, . . . but they think they have the right to tell anything that has happened within their memory. . . . They look upon matter of fact to be sufficient foundation for a story, and give us a long account of things, not because they are entertaining or surprising, but because they are true." A better embodiment of "this loquacious kind of animal" could hardly be imagined than Gert Westphaler, the central comic figure in Holberg's play of the same name. He is a barber with two or three tiresome screeds, which he finds occasion to repeat on the slightest provocation. He tells in wearisome detail of a journey which he made to Kiel in his youth, not because it has a "point of mirth or instruction," but merely because it "happened within his memory." He describes elaborately the constitution of the German Empire, and discourses tediously on the difference between Whig and Tory, not because the facts that he knows are entertaining or surprising, but because they are

true. He talks in every conceivable place, both public and private. He empties an inn with one of his political harangues, and, what is more important for the drama, bores his *fiancée* into marrying his rival. Whether the essay in *The Tatler*, in any sense, furnished the model upon which Gert was drawn, is a question of much less importance than the obvious fact that Steele and Holberg are attacking, each in his own way, the same social nuisance.

Addison frequently makes fun of various sorts of superstition. He devotes No. 117 of *The Spectator* to a consideration of witchcraft, about which he professes to believe that judgement should be suspended. "But," he says, "when I consider that the ignorant and credulous parts of the world abound most in these relations and that the persons among us who are supposed to engage in such an infernal commerce are people of a weak understanding and crazed imagination, and at the same time reflect upon the many impostures and delusions of this nature that have been detected in all ages, I endeavour to suspend my belief." In spite of this apparent tolerance, Addison shows by the story of Moll White, which he tells immediately after, that his ridicule loses none of its point through the judicial attitude which he as a critic affects. Holberg in two of his comedies, *Without Head or Tail* and *Witchcraft*, makes fun of the same superstition. In

the former, as has already been shown, the exposure of the fraud of a reputed witch converts two brothers of Ovidius from superstition to his attitude of sane, reasoned skepticism. In *Witchcraft*, Holberg shows how lucrative are the fraudulent magic arts practised by a man whom ignorant folk persist in regarding as a wizard. Here the author, speaking through the mouth of one of his characters, thus paraphrases Addison: "Is it not remarkable that one does not hear of witchcraft being practised in large places like Paris and London? If it were a natural science, it ought to be practised among the learned nations, who have erected colleges for scientific research, and not among people who can neither read nor write." Holberg thus, consciously or unconsciously, uses the same argument as Addison to show that a belief in witchcraft is not wicked, but unreasonable and ridiculous.

In *Tatler* No. 89 the abuses of calling are satirized, particularly that kind of social visit upon a convalescent which has a tendency "to congratulate him into a relapse." The editor, in commenting on the complaint of a correspondent, who objects to being pestered by calls when he is ill, says: "It is with some so hard a thing to employ their time, that it is a great good fortune when they have a friend indisposed, that they may be punctual in perplexing him, when he has recovered enough to be in that



state which cannot be called sickness or health; when he is too well to deny company and too ill to receive them. It is no uncommon case if a man is of any figure or power in the world, to be congratulated into a relapse." In *The Lying-in Chamber*, Holberg ridicules just this sort of social folly, and his attitude is the more significant because his satire is the only one of many on the subject which takes the same point of view as *The Tatler*. He regards the round of calls which custom decreed should be paid upon the young mother, not merely as a chance to satirize the women of his time, but also as an opportunity for protest in the name of the poor, afflicted convalescent against the unreasonableness of the custom.

In *Tatler* No. 32 the ideas of Platonic love which were exemplified in the life and writings of Mary Astell are satirized. Isaac Bickerstaff has received a letter from a *Platonne*, about whom he makes the following complaint: "If I speak to her, that is a high breach of intuition; if I offer at her hand or lip, she shrinks from the touch like a sensitive plant, and would contract herself into mere spirit." The subject of the main plot of Holberg's *Invisible Lovers* is taken, as has been pointed out, from Scarron's *Roman Comique*. Yet it will be remembered that nothing in that novel suggested the highly effective and original subplot dealing with Harlequin and

Columbiné. Now we may realize that in the boy's abortive attempts to imitate his master's highly spiritual and denatured wooing, Holberg was satirizing the same affectation as the English essayist, ridiculous insistence on the canons of a sublimated and romantic love, which rendered the winning of a woman an elaborate initiation into a holy mystery.

In these cases Holberg has made the subject of his comedies identical with the objects of attack in the English essays. At other times, satiric comment which appears incidentally in the comedies is exactly of the same sort as that found in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. In *The Spectator* No. 317, for example, Addison has Sir Andrew Freeport show the members of his club the journal of a friend who has recently died. The utter triviality of the entries renders them highly absurd. "Monday, eight o'clock: I put on my clothes and walked into the parlour. Nine o'clock, ditto: Tied my knee-strings and washed my hands. Hours Ten, Eleven, and Twelve: Smoked three Pipes of Virginia. Read the Supplement and Daily Courant. Things go ill in the North, Mr. Nisby's opinion thereupon," etc. In *Diderich, Terror of Mankind*, Jeronimus looks into his journal to find the record of the birth of his niece and reads the following entries: "On the 21st of January, between the hours of eight and nine, a very thick cloud covered the sky which seemed

surely to threaten rain ; but it passed over. The 22nd ditto, the whole day was foggy." "But, my dear brother," interrupts Elvire, "what is the sense in noting such trivial things?" "Wait a minute," continues Jeronimus, "I shall find it directly. On the 24th ditto, I saw a fine girl on the Square, whom I persuaded to . . . No, that's not what I am looking for. On the 24th, the heel came off my shoe." The similarity is obvious. Both authors ridicule the folly of keeping minute records of a vapid life, and the folly of the self-importance that sees in such trivialities material worthy of a chronicle.

Without multiplying such examples,\* one can safely assert that Holberg and the English essayists often point out the absurdity in exactly the same social foibles and almost invariably in follies of the same nature. He, as well as they, directed satire toward ends which they all called moral ; but the morality in which the English authors were interested was not fundamental. They did not concern themselves with the passions or the vital interests of men ; and for that very reason, as Steele says in *The Spectator* No. 4, the critic could "with greater sagacity consider their talents, manners, failings, and merits." Similarly, Addison, in *The Spectator* No. 10, explains his satiric purpose as that "of bringing philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-

tables, and in coffee-houses." Holberg, too, considered his satire moral. "If a writer of comedy," he says, "will only present a fault in its true colours, in such a way that he instructs and amuses at the same time, he will discharge his whole duty." The nature of his satire shows that he believed, like the English essayists, that morality should restrain rather the manners of men than their passions; and the objects of his satire make it probable that its quality was not accidentally like that of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

The spirit of such benevolent ridicule had perforce to be urbane. A woman cannot be persuaded to regard her lapdog less fondly by savage preaching; nor can a man be parted from his diary by an "armed and resolved hand." Holberg's comic spirit is, therefore, essentially indulgent. And it is just this condescending tolerance that makes his comedy, though in form now like that of Molière, now like that of Jonson, in spirit radically different from both. The evidence here adduced makes the inference irresistible: it was from the study of certain essays in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* that Holberg learned to be an urbane humanist. The farcical comedy through which he chose to express his social criticism inevitably obscures his essential kinship with the first of eighteenth-century moralists of the tea-table and coffee-house. Even though he expressed

his ideas in a form of low comedy, he is, in his own original way, a Danish Spectator.

Holberg's sojourn in England, then, which he professed to regard as a mere youthful escapade, proves to have been an important period of his life. It clearly established the admiration of Englishmen and their habits of thought which seems to have been the source of his interest in English literature, — an interest which became, like the man, eager and catholic. He by no means confined his reading to that English history, philosophy, and theology which have been regarded as formative influences upon his scholarship and philosophical notions. He read much miscellaneous English literature, some of which clearly influenced his early satiric and dramatic writing. Certain kinds of English comedy provoked his admiration and imitation. Of the Elizabethans his master was, not Shakespeare, but Jonson. Of later writers of English comedy, he clearly sympathized with those who remained true to the traditions of Jonson. Men like Farquhar showed him that the field of Danish comedy could be as extensive as the nation itself. Holberg decided, therefore, that no corner in Zealand should escape his search for figures illustrative of the varied life of his land. English plays thus helped to determine some of the most characteristic features of his art. Yet much that seems distinctive in his satiric attitude was not evoked by

English comedy, nor yet by the actual drama of any other country. Not until he had read the essays of Steele and Addison was his approach to his material definitely fixed; not until then did he become the tolerant critic of social extravagances and follies that, even in his moments of wildest physical farce, we realize him to be. Plainly, the influence of English literature upon Holberg's plays, though on the surface it is much less complex and diverse than that of French literature, was in reality equally formative and fundamental.

HOLBERG AND GERMAN AND LATIN  
LITERATURE





## CHAPTER VII

### HOLBERG'S RELATIONS TO GERMAN AND LATIN LITERATURE

#### I

**I**N the year 1722, little German literature existed which Holberg might have found either suggestive or inspiring. J. E. Schlegel, who could speak with the authority of personal acquaintance with the dramatist, says in a letter to Hagedorn, that Holberg understood but little German and paid slight attention to German authors.\* Those whom he read he knew almost by accident. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first German writer to exert a definite influence upon him was one whose work, in translation, had become a Danish classic.

Hans Willumsen Lauremberg, after extensive travels and a career as Professor of Poetry at the university in his native town of Rostock, was called to the newly established Royal Academy in Sorø in 1623, as Professor of Mathematics, Geography, and Engineering, and held this position until his death in 1658. In 1652, he published in his native Low German his most important work, *Four Satires*.† Almost simultaneously it appeared in an excellent Danish version, through which it exerted a pervasive and continuous influence on Danish litera-

ture down to Holberg's day. Holberg's formal satires bear unmistakable evidence of Lauremberg's influence. He even went so far as to publish his first collection of satires, though five in number, under the title of *Four Satires*, evidently wishing to advertise in this curious way their similarity to the earlier work.

The influence of Lauremberg upon Holberg's comedies is equally interesting. Lauremberg in his fourth satire directs much of his ridicule against a fawning, flattering poet, who tries to present his verses at the door of a possible patron, but is mistaken for a peddler and driven off by the maid. At last he comes into the presence of a rich citizen, only to hear from him a scathing denunciation of his versified adulation. "Your bridal hymns and your funeral encomiums," he says in effect, "to which you devote all your efforts, are written alike for those who will pay. Flattery is the object of your verse, and fulsome praise its sole subject. Whatever the morality of a dead man may have been, in your memorial verses his soul mounts in glory to heaven."\* The poet with these qualities and not the *bel esprit* Trissotin, is obviously the prototype of both Rosiflengius in *The Fortunate Shipwreck* and the two similar poets in *Arabian Powder*, who are willing, if well paid, to lament the death of Henrich's cat. Rosiflengius, too, writes verses of adulation for all who will pay.

In the words of his servant Gottfried, he allows the deceased to "stand with palms in their hands, whether they have lived decently or like beasts."\* It seems probable, then, that Rosiflengius owed his existence more to a definite literary tradition long established in Denmark, than to Holberg's observation of life in Copenhagen.

Lauremberg's third satire ridicules young men who on their return home, after spending a few weeks in Paris, call everyone Monsir, use the French words they know on every possible occasion, give their uncomprehending servants elaborate directions in French, and abuse them with a torrent of French oaths.† All of these affectations belong to Holberg's Jean de France. He combines with his pigeon French an almost insane eagerness to adopt the latest fashions in dress, but in this folly he is no more extreme than the similar fools of fashion ridiculed in Lauremberg's second satire. No one of the characters in the four German poems is a complete prototype of Holberg's Frenchified fool, yet in two or three of them taken together all of his characteristics could have been found. Holberg might have drawn Jean de France without knowing the English comic tradition which has been suggested as a probable source of the Danish figure.‡ To create the characters of Rosiflengius and Jean, he needed only to combine and revivify certain traditional figures of Danish satire.

Holberg's relation to Lauremberg's satires shows no real knowledge of Low German life or literature. In *The Political Tinker*, however, he reveals acquaintance with contemporary political conditions in Hamburg. Although Hermann von Bremen seems to be a direct descendant of Addison's political upholsterer, it was not by accident that the scene of his political exploits was laid in that city. From 1702 to 1708, the magistrates and people there had been engaged in a noisy feud. A Dr. Mayer, priest of the parish of St. James, by accusing a rival priest of heresy, had aroused the men of the two parishes to bitter hostility. He was accordingly banished to Pomerania as an enemy of the public welfare. His parishioners, under the leadership of two craftsmen, Stielcke and Lütze, had demanded his return by all sorts of riotous demonstrations. Holberg refers to this feud in *The Political Tinker*.<sup>\*</sup> The great popular appetite for politics in Hamburg is further shown by the numerous political periodicals which appeared there in the early eighteenth century. At least four of these are mentioned in *The Political Tinker* as sources of the wisdom of Hermann and his sage associates.<sup>†</sup> Holberg's choice of the German city for the home of Hermann von Bremen was not so much literary caution as deliberate art.

In 1703, Barthold Feind wrote a play on the civil

disturbances in Hamburg, *The Parish of Saint James in Uproar*,\* which has been thought to be the source of *The Political Tinker*.† Holberg may possibly have known the work, for in 1708, the year before he first visited Hamburg, a second edition had appeared, and it was probably presented in 1709, while he was there. Some similarities of detail exist between the Danish and the German play. The wife of Lütze, one of the riotous leaders, is called Geeske, a name which, though unusual in Denmark, Holberg gives to the wife of Hermann von Bremen. The two women occupy positions similar enough to make the identity of name [Geeske, Geske] rather striking.‡ The plot and general idea of the comedies, however, have almost nothing in common. One conversation between Beecke, the wife of Stielke, the other leader of the street brawl, and Geeske may find an echo in Holberg's work. The women talk together at first of their husbands' neglect of business and of the wretchedness into which that neglect has brought their families, but they presently find comfort in the dreams of the honour and riches which are to be theirs as soon as their husbands become powers in the city. Geeske first by her shrewish opposition to Hermann's disregard of business, and later by her ridiculous attempts to learn elegant manners, is a dramatic embodiment of the ideas expressed in the conversation of the women in Feind's play. These

small points of resemblance, whether accidental or deliberate, are important simply as evidence of the various ways in which Holberg attempted to give his play local colour.

The only German comedy to which any of Holberg's works bear evident dramatic resemblance is the *Horribilicribrifax* of Andreas Gryphius. Certain distinctive features of this work reappear in *Jacob von Tyboe*. The hero in each case is a conventional *miles gloriosus*, but Jacob von Tyboe himself owes almost all of his characteristics to the braggart soldiers of Latin comedy. The plays, however, are significantly alike in that they both provide the soldier a bitter rival in the person of a grandiose pedant. Two such figures are frequently rivals in certain forms of Renaissance comedy; a pedant and a soldier, for example, are often both suitors for the hand of the *amorosa* in the *commedia dell'arte*. Yet the German Sempronius talks so much like the Danish Stygotius that the characters seem to be directly related. When Sempronius finds himself compelled to wage formal war upon his braggart rival, he speaks thus in praise of his weapon: "My good old Spanish sword with which I have broken the windows of the Rector Magnificus in so many universities." Stygotius in a like situation reassures himself and his soldiers as follows: "I possess still the same blade, the same hilt, with which I have

shattered the windows of so many worthy professors in Rostock." That both of these men should offer exactly the same convincing proof of their military achievements is hardly accidental. If a direct connection is thus established between the figures, other similarities between them become significant.

Like all stage pedants, these learned fools are profuse with their Latin quotations; but, with meticulous accuracy, which none of their forerunners display, they are at pains to refer each of their quotations to its source. "As the poet says (*Metamorphoses*, Book two)," is a typical phrase in their carefully ordered conversation. When they meet the braggart soldiers, their rivals in love, they enter upon exciting word-combats in which the warrior's strange oaths, learned from many nations, are matched by the pedant's thunderous Latin and Greek. The murderous exploits of the braggart are similarly offset by the scholar's mighty triumphs in scholastic debate. "I have won over twenty battles," shouts Jacob. "And I have disputed over twenty times *absque praesidio*," answers Stygotius. In like manner Sempronius had boasted, "Do you think that I in my youth haven't also learned to fight at the university, πολλῶν ἐγὼ θριῶν ψόφους ἀκήκοα." Perhaps it was association with these learned men that made both soldiers consider poetic ability as a part of their omniscience. "As if I could n't carry on the

contest with many sonnets, madrigals, quatrains, odes, concertos, sarabandes, serenades, and aubades!" is one of Horribilicribrifax's scornful taunts. Jacob, for his part, gives unmistakable evidence of his lyric gift in a serenade that he has composed for his lady, beginning, "Lucilia, my jolly dolly."

Jacob von Tyboe, then, complete product of Latin conventions though he is, has for a rival a figure developed by a different comic convention. Stygotius is simply one of the many pedants of Renaissance comedy, yet his particular foibles prove him to have been created in the likeness of Sempronius. In this, perhaps the most conventional of Holberg's plays, are fused at least three distinct comic traditions,—that of pure classical comedy, that of the pure *commedia dell' arte*, and that of the *commedia dell' arte* as modified by the German dramatist Gryphius. Yet, for all that, it is still amusing enough to be played frequently at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen to enthusiastic audiences.

The German dramas that Holberg knew best were of a sort to fill him with contempt. They were chiefly the extravagant pieces of the vagrant German comedians, who, after the death of Johann Veltheim in 1704, wandered as far north as Sweden and Denmark. The repertory of these companies consisted almost exclusively of the so-called *Haupt- und Staatsactionen*.<sup>\*</sup> Each of the plays was an inconsequential



trilogy. The first part was a debased development of the political drama that had been composed by such men as Gryphius and Lohenstein during the early seventeenth century, — an incoherent chronicle play, in which the principal characters acted like the heroes of degenerate mediaeval romance. The second part was an impromptu farce dominated by Hans Wurst; the last part a gorgeous spectacle: it might consist of dances by a chorus, of arias, or even of illuminations and fireworks. It grew to be, indeed, the popular equivalent of the opera, which at this time was beginning to be a fashionable diversion in Germany.

The company with whom the plays became definitely associated in Copenhagen had been organized by a certain Solomon Poulsen von Quoten,\* who, after a chequered career as itinerant oculist, dentist, and manipulator of a marionette theatre, finally obtained permission in 1718 to present “German comedies,” a name which the Danes always applied to the *Haupt- und Staats-actionen*, in Copenhagen. Holberg regarded his company both as a rival organization and as an artistic anomaly. On many occasions, therefore, he makes it the object of his ridicule. In *Witchcraft*, a character representing von Quoten himself appears, to gloat over the punishment which he expects will fall upon the comedian Leander for his supposed practice of the black art. He sees in the wizard’s detection an indirect vindi-

cation of his own long despised drama. In delight he ventures to make the time an occasion to advertise his new dramatic performance, *The Enchantment of Armida*. "It is a real play," he says, "everything happens in the air—and Armida never appears, save mounted on a flaming dragon, which spits fire." In the *New Year's Prologue*, Mars describes the tumultuous action of the typical von Quoten play in the following bit of doggerel:

Now champions, now sieges,  
Now rape of maids and strife,  
Now one who broken-heartedly  
Decides to take his life;  
Now persons changed to stones and trees,  
And dragons all of fire, one sees.

*Ulysses von Ithacia*, however, is Holberg's only complete parody of "German comedies," and in his autobiography he is at pains to indicate what features of them his satire ridicules most directly. "This comedy," he says, "attacks those ill-constructed, tasteless, fifty-year-long comedies which were formerly presented here by wandering actors. The action of the play extends over a period of forty years, and the scene is changed incessantly. The heroes talk in an inflated, bombastic style to distinguish them from the common folk; a trumpet is blown every time that a general enters; and the characters are one moment youths and the next,

grey-haired old men. All these absurdities Ulysses's servant, Chilian, exposes so cleverly that the common people, who usually yawn over moral and critical works, were no less amused than persons of intelligence."

It is perhaps the immense leaps in time and space which the characters so jauntily take that most often provoked Chilian's naïve astonishment. "Well, well, how time does fly!" he says when he suddenly finds that the scene of the play has changed from Greece to Troy. "Now we have all come to Troy, which is four hundred miles from our native land. If I didn't see the town before my eyes now, I should think that things were happening as they do in a German comedy, where at one stride a fellow can often move thousands of miles, and in one evening become forty years older than he was before. But the thing is true just the same; for here where I point with my finger lies Troy. (He takes a light and walks across the stage.) It is certainly written here in Gothic letters, 'This represents Troy.' " He insists also in testing Ulysses's remark that Penelope is still in the flower of her youth by the hard and fast rules of simple arithmetic. He finds that the lady must be sixty-one, but he is naturally afraid to protest against the time-honoured conventions of the drama. "Twenty-five and thirty-six make sixty-one. Yes, that is so, she

is still in the flower of her youth," he concludes mechanically. The crude stage devices that the German players accepted without question, Chilian finds utterly beyond his comprehension. At one moment he is forced to reassure himself repeatedly that the wisp of a broom is really an olive branch; at the next he takes a bit of theatrical pretence so seriously that he begins to carve his initials on the back of one of his companions whom Dido's (!) sorcery has turned into trees.

The absurdity of the magnificent bombast is evident without any commentary from Chilian. It speaks for itself. Paris, Rosimunda, and particularly Ulysses, talk in the exalted strain adopted by the princes in the German plays. Ulysses calls for his blood-besprinkled sword Dyrendal and for his "helmet which the Brazilian Queen of Saba set on my knightly head with her alabaster hands when I set out for my combat with the four-headed knight Langulamesosapolidorous." And Rosimunda addresses Penelope as "my dearest sister, Ithaca's sun and joy, the family's jewel and precious stone."

It is impossible now to tell whether or not Holberg intended his play to be an exact parody of any definite "German comedy." One of the plays presented in Berlin in the early part of the eighteenth century was called *Ulysses von Ithacia*.<sup>\*</sup> We know, furthermore, that in 1747-48, von Quoten's com-

pany gave in Copenhagen a piece called *Ulysses and Penelope, or The Faithful Constancy*, which may have been a redaction of one of Veltheim's plays which bore the title *Ulysses and Penelope*. The adventures of Ulysses were evidently a favourite subject for the authors of the *Haupt- und Staats-actionen*, so that it is by no means improbable that Holberg had seen von Quoten's company give a Ulysses comedy. Moreover, a German opera *Ulysses* was presented at the Danish court just a month before the new Danish theatre was opened,\* the libretto of which bears one or two superficial resemblances to Holberg's play. It, too, begins with an introduction in which Neptune and Jupiter appear; and provides Ulysses with a merry servant, Arpax, who has the same sort of stupid common sense as Chilian, only without his satire. He is, for example, similarly wearied by the incessant wanderings on the sea, and similarly doubtful about Penelope's stubborn constancy and chastity.† Holberg would have welcomed a chance to include German opera in his ridicule of German drama. It was much the more dangerous rival of the Danish theatre, for it enjoyed the patronage of the court and the support of the wealthy citizens of Copenhagen. Holberg surely found Ulysses a better hero for his parody because the libretto of the popular German opera dealt with the same subject.

On the whole, J. E. Schlegel was undoubtedly correct in his estimate of Holberg's knowledge of German literature. It was, one may say, wholly accidental. Except for some fugitive and superficial influences, he knew only such German literature as he was bound to ridicule. But it is no mean service to provide a comic dramatist with subjects upon which to exercise his wit. The wretched *Haupt- und Staats-actionen* in this way have won a great and undeserved immortality by furnishing Holberg the material for one of the most amusing parodies in all literature.

## II

Holberg has made his relation to both Greek and Latin comedy thoroughly clear by exact statements about his knowledge and use of the classics. His acquaintance with Greek literature was not extensive, for he himself says that besides the historians, he had read only the *Iliad* and two comedies of Aristophanes.\* The influence of this reading upon him is practically negligible. His indebtedness to Latin comedy, however, is of considerable importance. Holberg leaves us in no doubt that it was Plautus and not Terence whom he admired and imitated. "Terence," he says in one of his *Epistles*, "is, it is true, entirely free from faults, while Plautus is full of them; yet I prefer a fine

face with some blemishes to an insipid face without any. Only for his language and the purity of his diction does Terence deserve praise ; in all other respects he does not compare with Plautus." "Of all the comedies of Terence," he remarks in another place, "the *Eunuchus* is the only one which could be played with any effect on the modern stage." Three of his own plays, he freely admits, are based upon Plautus: *A Ghost in the House* upon the *Mostellaria*; *Diderich, the Terror of Mankind* upon the *Pseudolus*; and *Jacob von Tyboe* upon *Miles Gloriosus*.

Of *A Ghost in the House* he says: "The piece can pass for an original, although the material is taken from Plautus's *Mostellaria*. A French writer, too, has recently recast that play in a new form under the title *Retour Imprévu*."\* In spite of Holberg's claim to originality, the action follows that of the *Mostellaria* scene for scene. Only two differences of any importance exist between the dramas. First, inasmuch as Holberg does not introduce a single woman character, he finds no place for the typical Plautine scenes of courtesans and procuresses. Secondly, Henrich not only tells the traditional story about the haunted house, but he also makes up as the ghost himself, and by threatening to take Jeronimus straight to hell, makes the old man give up his purse. This disguise, as has been shown above, was

one that Henrich, in imitation of Arlequin, often assumed in situations where it was not nearly so suitable as here. Holberg evidently found it one of his most successful bits of horse-play. Into the ready-made ghost story of the *Mostellaria*, therefore, he almost inevitably introduced Henrich in his favourite disguise.\*

*Diderich, the Terror of Mankind*, according to Holberg, was inspired by the *Pseudolus*. The plots of the plays, while not alike scene for scene, are distinctly similar. In the Latin play, Calidorus, who is in love with the slave girl Phoenicum, the property of the procurer Ballio, is horrified to hear that she has been sold to a captain for twenty minae. Fifteen minae have already been paid down, and upon the payment of the remaining five, the soldier will get possession of the girl. Calidorus turns in desperation to his slave Pseudolus, whom he implores to find some way of saving Phoenicum. The slave, of course, is delighted to help. Luck favours him from the first, for he meets by chance Harpax, the captain's servant, on his way to deliver to Ballio the five minae. Pseudolus immediately pretends to be the procurer's own steward, and in this character persuades Harpax to give him his letter of identification. But he is unable to induce the cautious messenger to deliver the money to anyone but Ballio himself. He therefore gets his friend Samia to pass himself off on



Ballio as Harpax,—a thing easily accomplished with the help of the letter of identification,—and so has Phoenicum delivered to him. Then Pseudolus ends the play in a drunken celebration at the complete success of his series of tricks.

*Diderich, the Terror of Mankind*, begins almost exactly like the *Pseudolus*. Leander is in love with the slave girl Hyacinthe, who is the property of the Jew Ephraim. She, too, has been sold to a blustering captain, with an impressive German name, Hans Frantz Diderich Menschen-Skraek. Henrich, Leander's servant, interests himself in his master's efforts to obtain Hyacinthe. He meets the captain's servant as he comes to get the girl, and with even greater impudence than Pseudolus had shown, successfully pretends to be the Jew. He easily gets possession of the captain's money, and then delivers to the servant, not Hyacinthe, but the captain's own long-suffering wife. Then he takes upon himself the rôle that Samia played in the *Pseudolus* and plays the part of the captain's servant, Christopher Mauerbrecher.\* In this disguise he easily induces the Jew to give him Hyacinthe for his amorous master.

Up to this point Holberg's play has been little but the *Pseudolus*, simplified by attributing to Henrich an invention somewhat more daring and ingenious than that of the Roman slave, and complicated by the introduction of Diderich's own wife. The irony

of giving to the German captain his old discarded wife instead of the lovely slave girl has no counterpart in the *Pseudolus*. Neither is there any suggestion for the humour of the scene in which Diderich abuses his spouse before the veiled slave girl, only to have the supposed mistress throw off her veil and disclose the irate countenance of his wife. Holberg makes another change in his source in the interest of the same sort of irony. Henrich, instead of celebrating his winning of Hyacinthe in drunken revelry, devises still another trick. When Diderich comes to pay Ephraim for the woman, who later proves to be his own wife, Henrich disguises himself as the Jew for the second time and takes the captain's money. Then when, a few minutes later, the real Ephraim enters, Henrich has him declared an impostor and led off to prison. The ironic humour of these two incidents is much more clearly an expression of Holberg's comic spirit than of that of Latin comedy.

At the end of Holberg's play, Hyacinthe proves to be a long-lost daughter of Leander's aunt, and consequently the very girl whom his father had intended him to marry. This device is, of course, a commonplace of Latin comedy. Holberg might have come upon it in the *Curculio*, for example, which is like his play in several other small points.\* Holberg in writing *Diderich, the Terror of Mankind*, undoubt-

edly started to compose a version of the *Pseudolus*. As the action developed, however, his imitation grew less and less slavish. He not only inserted suitable incidents from other Latin plays with which his mind was stored, but he also added a few incidents of his own invention, which gave expression to a kind of ironic humour not characteristic of Latin comedy. Yet *A Ghost in the House*, in spite of its somewhat motley character, is as unmistakably a Latin comedy as *Diderich, the Terror of Mankind*.

*Jacob von Tyboe*, on the other hand, is a Latin comedy merely because its comic protagonist is a thoroughly conventional *miles gloriosus*. Holberg admits that Plautus's soldier was his definite model, and insists that, although Jacob is his most exaggerated creation, he is no more unreal than his prototype, or than Terence's Thraso. Tyboe's imitation of Pyrgopolinices is fundamental and continuous. The Roman soldier listens with the utmost satisfaction while his parasite calls to mind his mighty deeds. He hears how he alone in a single day slaughtered one hundred and fifty men in Cilivie, one hundred in Cryphiolathrona, thirty in Sardis, and sixty in Macedon; and how he broke the trunk of an elephant with his bare fist. Tyboe has similar exploits to his credit. At the siege of Brabant he fought unaided with the entire garrison, and at the battle of Amsterdam killed more than six hundred

men with his own arm. Both of the braggarts are made to believe that they are as beautiful as the gods, and that the women are all in love with them. Artotrogus praises Pyrgopolinices for his beauty until he readily believes that the woman next door is madly eager for his favours. Jesper, the Danish parasite, praises Tyboe's beauty with equal extravagance until he makes him believe that Lucilia cannot fail to be enamoured of so much loveliness. Finally, in spite of their magnificent exploits in the past, both of these empty boasters are ignominiously trounced by the lovers of the women whom they persecute with their attentions.

In these, his prominent traits of character, Tyboe is an exact copy of Plautus's most farcical figure. Yet Tyboe has also assumed characteristics of Terence's Thraso, the much less extravagant soldier of the *Eunuchus*. Like many men of unusually slow wit, Thraso takes peculiar pride in his skill in repartee. He fills nearly one entire scene by recounting to his parasite Gnatho the clever replies that he has made to people at court. Though these are either stupid variations of the primitive "You are a fool" or inept repetitions of proverbial expressions,\* Gnatho forces himself to shout with laughter at their humour. Jacob, too, has at least one bit of marvellous repartee which he reports to his admiring parasite. At a certain banquet he replied to the teasing

of a table companion by shouting so that all could hear him, "Monsieur Christoffersen, you are in sooth a fool." Jesper not only roars with laughter when he hears this reply, but he also keeps Tyboe's heart warm towards him by making him repeat the retort again and again. This situation is more farcical than the similar one in the *Eunuchus*. Thraso, who mistakes a stale proverb for original wit, has as many descendants as he had undoubted prototypes; Jacob's wit would not amuse a schoolboy. Yet Tyboe's pride in his own inane jokes and Jesper's uproarious attempts at mirth are clearly Holberg's version of the similar scene between Thraso and Gnatho.

Certain features, moreover, of Tyboe's fight with Stygotius and the later attack of their combined army upon Leonora's house were undoubtedly suggested by the similar attack which Thraso and his army make upon the house of Thais. Thraso decides to occupy the position which Pyrrhus always found the best spot for the general,—the rear. Tyboe under the same conditions asserts that the general is always the hindmost. When, in the *Eunuchus*, Chremes comes out of the house of Thais to protect her from Thraso, he orders off the valiant captain as though he were a mere dog, and Gnatho expresses pity for the man who dares treat thus cavalierly a soldier of the transcendent prowess of his patron. When Leonard in Holberg's play, coming out to protect

Leonora's house from a similar attack, falls upon Tyboe, Jesper, like Gnatho, tries to convince Leonard of his danger by a sarcastic *résumé* of Jacob's mighty deeds. "Do you know what you are doing?" he exclaims. "You are fighting with a man who has won over five thousand sieges," etc. The attack upon the house of Thais, which Terence treats in one scene, Holberg, with the aid of numerous bits of physical farce borrowed from the *commedia dell'arte*, expands into nearly a whole act of horse-play.

These details of resemblance, uninteresting in themselves, are important because they show how thoroughly and unimaginatively Holberg made use of Latin comedy. *A Ghost in the House*, *Diderich*, *the Terror of Mankind*, and *Jacob von Tyboe* are none of them illustrations of the application of the Roman comic spirit to life contemporary with Holberg; they are rather collections of slavishly copied details. Holberg's three Plautine plays are, therefore, among his least original and least significant works. The fact that *Jacob von Tyboe* is played successfully to-day is a tribute not to Holberg's comic invention so much as to the permanent quality of Plautus's humour. Yet a study of Holberg's Latin plays is important, if for no other reason, because it shows the difference between his constructive imitations and his lifeless redactions. Holberg transformed Molière; he transcribed Plautus.

## HOLBERG'S GENIUS





## CHAPTER VIII

### HOLBERG'S GENIUS

**B**Y means of the foregoing studies of details and extended comparisons of diverse comic arts, the elements of Holberg's genius have been in a measure revealed. Yet a summary of its most characteristic features will doubtless aid in establishing a unified impression of his distinctive quality.

Holberg's art was primarily cosmopolitan, and therefore wholly independent of the earlier literature of both Denmark and Norway. He despised the little mediaeval Scandinavian literature then accessible, and probably regarded the popular Danish ballads and tales with complete indifference. Holberg shared all the intellectual prejudices of the eighteenth century. He found the Denmark of his day provocative to satire just because it was so little acquainted with the new ideas current in the great centres of culture. The reading of the average Dane seemed to him ridiculously out of date. "The ordinary man of the middle class," he says, "reads nothing in poetry but congratulatory occasional verse, nothing in theology but funeral orations and sermon books, almost nothing in drama but old stories of Adam and Eve." Because he believed that only through literature could his countrymen be awakened, he devoted all his energy

to bringing Danish writing of every sort into the stream of progressive European thought.

None of Holberg's intellectual forbears were Scandinavians. Even a critic like Olaf Skavlan, who is particularly eager to discover Norwegian elements in Holberg's work, admits that he received his inspiration "not from the Latin he read in Bergen, not from the theology in which he was examined in Copenhagen; but from Bayle and Locke, Montaigne and Herbert, Montesquieu and Grotius, Molière and Swift." These are the men whose ideas he assimilated, whose stamp he bears. Holberg's comedies, then, like all the rest of his work, are an expression of the cosmopolitan culture of the eighteenth century.

Holberg's mind was not inclined to delight in venerable national traditions. He wrote much history without possessing a keen historical sense. He felt and saw life in its immediacy. His literary methods being realistic, no character in his plays seems foreign or exotic. Although his literary forms and the ideas animating them are the common property of Europe, his characters are undeniably Danish. Magdelone is never a mere slavish copy of her French prototype. She shows frequently a nature more fundamentally feminine than that of the shrewd bourgeois mothers in the French author's comedies. Even the intentionally perfunctory *amo-*

*rosa* in Holberg becomes a giggling peasant girl. Henrich, in his inception as incorrigible a zany as Arlequin, grows through his constant contact with Danish reality into the full stature of a national type. Arv, the descendant of Pierrot, appears as a chore boy, reeking of the Danish soil. Pernille, too, transforms the artificiality that she has inherited from the pert, intriguing Colombine into robust and homely reality. So strong, indeed, is Holberg's interest in the creation of vital and convincing humorous figures that he contrives to transform mere comic tricks of other writers into devices for illuminating character. The gorgeous ballet with which *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* closes is converted by Holberg into a ceremony that evokes the most characteristic of Don Ranudo's actions. At the centre of every one of his situations Holberg has placed an astonishingly real man or woman.

Yet Holberg's conception of character is usually picturesque rather than profound. He had none of the scientific interest in the intensive study of motive which distinguishes modern intellectual naturalists. His realistic method was often superficial, because it attempted descriptions of surface actions, rather than analyses of motives. The causes of almost all human action were explained by the convenient Jonsonian theory of "humours." Holberg, moreover, was apparently willing to sacrifice psycholog-

ical truth for the sake of intensifying his ridicule. The fickle-minded woman in his drama changes her mind more often and more abruptly than any sane human being could be imagined as doing, yet she undoubtedly seemed to Holberg, for that very reason, a more effective comic figure. An author with a keen sense for psychological truth would hardly have chosen for one of his central characters a merely loquacious barber. Such characters as these are men of but two dimensions. Holberg has seen in them no more than has met his eye. His imagination, indeed, was too often a slave of his vision. He was very careful never to attempt to portray any character who moved at all beyond the range of his personal observation. The feelings of young lovers, for example, and even their simplest actions, were not within the limits of his experience. He therefore sedulously avoided the portrayal of love scenes. In one play, *Masquerades*, where he apparently does not know how to escape such a scene, he relies wholly upon pantomime. Instead of trying to write dialogue, he gives the following directions for a dumb show: "Interlude, wherein a masquerade is enacted. Leander is presented as being in love with a masked woman who is Leonora, Leonard's daughter."

Thus Holberg's realism had its limitations. The nature of the foibles that he desired to ridicule

tended to keep his observation vigilant rather than deep. As a humanist, trained in the school of Addison, he wished to reform manners and not morals. The objects of his satire were superficial absurdities, and he directed all the clearness of his intellect to reflecting the actions of men, and not to detecting their passions. Though his realism was comparatively shallow, it gave the breath of life to everything that it touched. His descriptions of characters were so circumstantial that his contemporaries insisted that they were all copies of definite men and women. His "moral satire" they reduced to the level of personal abuse. Holberg found such literal-minded interpretation of his work a constant source of irritation. Of *Peder Paars* he exclaimed with disgust: "I am certain that if Hans Mikkelsen's poem were to be translated into Persian, many of the inhabitants of Ispahan would swear that the satire was directed against them." Holberg's realistic methods reproduced the surroundings of his characters and the customs of the every-day life of eighteenth-century Denmark with the same striking verisimilitude. Oehlenschläger expressed his admiration for this quality of Holberg's genius by saying: "If Copenhagen were to be utterly destroyed, and in a subsequent generation only Holberg's comedies were to be unearthed, the Copenhagen of the early eighteenth century could be reconstructed from them

alone as completely as Pompeii and Herculaneum have been." We may add not only the great city, but also the typical village and farm of Zealand at the same time.

Praise of this sort makes it clear that Holberg's realism was immediate and photographic. What his observation lacked in penetration, it supplied in vividness and versatility. His eagerness to discover all the humorous elements in Danish life made him tireless in his search for facts and uncompromising in his accurate portrayal of them. This quality of Holberg's mind sharply distinguishes him from Molière. He feels the compulsion of no dramatic social traditions. He feels no responsibility for the respectability, or even for the decency, of his dramatic creations. If country folk possessed ridiculous characteristics, Holberg saw no reason why they should not appear on the stage in garb as uncouth as that they wore in actual life. If the elemental love of Danish peasant girls filled their talk with simpering vulgarity, why should Lisbed, in *Erasmus Montanus*, speak with any more refinement? If a Danish peasant often lay in a drunken stupor upon a dung-heap, why should not Jeppe of the Hill be exhibited in an equally foul condition? Indeed, Holberg's sense of fact is often saved from sheer brutality only by the genial humour which plays like sunlight over all the squalor of the low life that he depicts.

Fortunately, too, in just those places where Holberg's realism photographs with the most uncomfortable truth, it becomes, as it were, transfigured. Vulgar facts lead us beyond themselves to situations of permanent, and even universal, significance, of which they are the mere symbols. The coarseness of a detail is forgotten as soon as it is seen to be typical. Jeppe is more than a dirty and brutish drunkard, just as Erasmus is more than a farcical pedant. In the person of each of them, widely prevalent social conditions of a past time are expressed in human terms of lasting truth and vitality. Through historical records, we may know the facts of a past epoch; through characters like Jeppe and Erasmus, we may actually experience them. But the interest that such realistic figures arouse is not primarily historical. They possess enough of the stuff of common human nature always to awaken sympathetic comprehension. The situations, therefore, of which they form the centres are of universal appeal; and the characters, like all great artistic creations, belong, not to one nation or to one age, but to the cosmopolitan life of all time.

Holberg, then, deserves a permanent place in the literature of the world. To his Danish contemporaries he was significant largely because he brought the literature of his country into the current of European thought. To the Danish people of to-day he is

important because he presents them with vivid pictures of their ancestors. To the literary historian he is interesting because his work illustrates, better than that of almost anyone else, the process by which elements of widely different sorts may be combined by a genius so as to produce a profoundly original national literature. To lovers of letters, finally, Holberg will appeal for his intrinsic merits. He will prove a source of delight because he was able to make his vividly realized facts concerning Danish life of the eighteenth century typical of universal human experience. Thus Holberg's laughter, evoked by the folly of mankind two hundred years ago, bids fair to be immortal.



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## NOTES





## NOTES

Page 9. For a description of the officials, see Holberg's *Bergens Beskrivelse*, part 2, *passim*.

Page 10. Robert Molesworth, the English Minister to Denmark in the year 1692, in *An Account of Denmark as it was in the Year 1692*, describes the Danes as almost never emerging from a universal mediocrity. "You shall never meet with men of extraordinary parts or qualifications," he says. Molesworth is, however, a prejudiced witness. He had been dissatisfied with his reception at the Danish court and so he could see nothing good in the country. When the book appeared, the Danish ambassador to England, Mogens Skeel, thought it so vile a slander on his country that he made vigorous, though ineffectual, efforts to have the book condemned and burned by the common hangman. For the entire subject, see Brasch, *passim*.

Page 11. For the marks he received in this examination, see J. Møller's *Mnemosyne*, II, 309, 310.

Page 12. Holberg's expressed admiration for these women of Christiansand has led certain biographers, who must have a love affair in the dramatist's life, to look for it in the events of this winter. Such romancers (cf. Vilhelm Andersen's *Erasmus Montanus*, in *Litteratur Billeder*, I, 2 ff.; *Hvorfor? Holbergske Studie i en Act*, by Anna Borch, Cop., 1888) have discovered that Holberg's second cousin, Bishop Stroud, with whom he lived in Christiansand, had a younger sister. And just because the young dramatist was in love with her, he was enthusiastic in his approval of the young women of Bergen!

Page 13.\* His *De officio hominis et civis*, which is a *résumé* of his *De jure naturae et gentium*.

Page 13.† He did write, while he was in college, four conventional Latin declamations: (1) *De peregratione*, 1710; (2) *In laudem historiarum*, 1711; (3) *De praestantia hodiernae musicae*, 1712; (4) *De linguarum*, 1713. These declamations were never printed, and unfortunately are all lost.

Page 15. He tells us that he went particularly to the library at the Collège des Quatres Nations because he could find there the greatest number of modern books. The one volume for which everyone made a mad rush each morning when the library opened was Bayle's *Dictionary*.

Page 21. He was born in Flensburg in 1690, went to the University of Halle in 1706, and matriculated in the University of Copenhagen in 1714. Soon after, he obtained a travelling fellowship in medicine, which he held for three years, and in 1719 had only recently been an unsuccessful candidate for a professorship in the University of Copenhagen.

Page 26. This name is supposed to be a palpable pseudonym for a certain Silke Gad, a clever woman of Bergen. See Daae's *Optegnelser til Holbergs Biografi*, p. 26.

Page 34. For the documents relating to this commission, see *Danske Samlinger*, first series, III, 358. They were first used to explain the provenience of Holberg's first Latin Epistle by Olsvig, in *Det store Vendepunkt i Holbergs Liv*.

Page 36. *Lud. Holberg Epistola ad virum perillustrem*, 1728, p. 188: "Scripta erat ab amico, qui consilium mihi dedit accelerandi itineris, cum inimici mei insidias absenti struerent."

Page 37.\* On this date Hans Gram, in a letter to Fabricius, mentions the work.

Page 37.† Olsvig, in *Det store Vendepunkt i Holbergs Liv*, was the first of the fanciful interpreters. He tried to make the Latin date, *pridie Calend. Januar Anno MDCCXXVII*, mean December 31, 1726. The letter, then, he would have us believe, is Holberg's strong apology for his life, written immediately after his return from abroad, when he had first heard of the cabal formed against him. Furthermore, Olsvig would have the "*vir perillustis*" a no less eminent person than King Frederik IV. These theories can by no means be accepted in their entirety. Olsvig's effort to make the date on the letter read December 31, 1726, is certainly not successful. Not only

is it impossible to make the Latin words mean what he wishes, but much of the letter can be shown to have been written in 1727. His assumption, furthermore, that the "*vir perillustis*" is the king, is highly fanciful. Other phases of his interpretation have been received with greater credence. Just Bing, in his *Holbergs Første Levnelsebrev*, believes with him that the letter is Holberg's apology for his life, written in Latin because he was anxious to show his skill in the subject in which he was professor. He believes, however, that the letter is addressed through Rostgaard to Count U. A. Holstein, then patron of the university, and the one man in all Denmark to whom a letter such as Bing assumes this to be would most appropriately be addressed.

Unfortunately, this interesting theory is not sufficiently established by facts. In the first place, it is almost impossible that Holberg could have known of this proposed commission. The proposal never came to the notice of the king, as shown by evidence in the possession of Mr. Carl S. Petersen, Under Librarian of the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Deikmann left Copenhagen early in 1725, never to return, and the plan was probably so completely forgotten by April, 1726, that no friend of Holberg could have heard of it then. If Holberg had believed that this commission was actively plotting against him in the spring of 1726, he would scarcely have waited almost two years before finishing the apology for his life which was to be his answer to their machinations. Finally, there is nothing apologetic about the epistle.

*Page 47.* The first translation appeared in 1742 under the title, *A Journey to the World Underground, by Nicholas Klimius. Translated from the Original.* A second edition of this translation appeared in 1755. Since then there have been three translations, the last in 1828.

*Page 50.* The existence of three different versions of the play gives some colour to this supposition. The first version exists only in a manuscript preserved in the University Library at Copenhagen (Folio MS. No. 149); the second version appeared in the edition of 1745; the third and best known ver-

sion appeared in the posthumous collection of his plays, published in 1754.

Page 51.\* See a letter by Holberg written to the actors in 1753. In it he says: "Jeg har at igjennemsee Stykker og at dømme om deres Capacitet som antages til at agere."

Page 51.† The performance on April 14, 1747, which Overskou (II, 29) gives as the first, was undoubtedly private.

Page 56. For this will, see Wille Høyberg: *Kjöbenhavnske Samlinger af rare trykte og utrykte Piecer*, No. XV, p. 457. The girl had to satisfy the following conditions: (1) She had to be Danish born; (2) to have at least one Norwegian or Danish parent; (3) to be of spotless reputation; (4) to be too poor to furnish her own dowry. To one girl fulfilling these requirements a dowry was to be given each year.

Page 63. Neither *A New Year's Prologue to a Comedy* nor *The Funeral of Danish Comedy* is included in this classification. They are mere clever strings of dramatic business, concocted to serve one particular occasion. They do not, therefore, deserve to be classed with his comedies proper.

Page 74. Professor Vilhelm Andersen, in his essay *Erasmus Montanus (Litteratur Billeder, I, 1-28)*, develops this idea in his usual brilliant fashion. To him I owe much in my analysis.

Page 78. *Om Ludvig Holbergs Jeppe paa Bjerget*, p. 1. I have followed in some detail Dr. Brandes's analysis of this play.

Page 86. *Grevens og Friherrens Komædie; en dramatisk Satire fra Christian V's Tid*, ed. Sophus Birket Smith.

Page 87. For example, the talk (III, 2) about the social customs of a lying-in chamber may have given him the original idea of writing an entire comedy on the same subject.

Page 107. Certain figures in Holberg's comedies are, to be sure, clearly fashioned on some one of Molière's characters. Jeronimus in *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*, for example, is a copy of Trissotin, and Jeronimus in *Den Honnøtte Ambition* is a copy of

M. Jourdain. Yet in each of these cases Holberg has changed the nature of his character enough to make his satire subtly different in kind. Trissotin is the embodiment of the literary ideals of the learned ladies. Molière shows through him that literary taste cultivated for the social market-place is pedantry and affectation, "Qu'un sot savant est sot plus qu'un sot ignorant." Rosiflengius is an essentially different sort of fool. He is a professional poetical encomiast. Molière is satirizing pedantic *préciosité*; Holberg, the human delight in fulsome flattery. The former foible is essentially intellectual; the latter, largely social. M. Jourdain pursues the graces of high society with a headlong intensity that is utterly extravagant; Jeronimus seeks a title by timid, devious diplomacy. The former lacks intellectual decency; the latter, social *savoir faire*. In changing the nature of the foibles, Holberg always changes the nature of the laughter that they provoke.

Page 108.\* Legrelle says (p. 145): "Le ridicule de la rusticité, c'est-à-dire celui de M. de Pourceaugnac, lui [Holberg] a fourni jusqu'à trois comédies, *Le Onze Junii* (*Den Ellefte Junii*), *Le Petit Paysan en Gage* (*Den Pansatte Bonde-Dreng*), et *Jeppe de Berg* (*Jeppe paa Bjerget*).'' He makes no further comparison of the plays. The first of the three Danish plays is distinctly similar in plot to *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*; the other two are like it only in having a fooled rustic for the central character.

Page 108.† Legrelle, in his fourth chapter, called "Des Analogies du Style," gives the most complete collection of this sort of similarity. Indeed, his list is more than complete. More than once he attributes some extremely conventional comic device found in Holberg to the influence of Molière, simply because he finds Holberg in these cases more like Molière than like Plautus. On pp. 301, 302, for example, he proves by this curiously fallacious logical method that so inevitable a comic convention as quarrels between man and wife are copies of similar quarrels in Molière. Almost half of the similarities presented by Legrelle in this chapter are of this general and inconclusive sort.

Page 110. *Le Malade Imaginaire*, I, 5.

Page 111. *Den Stundesløse*, I, 7. Holberg uses exactly the same device in *Pernilles Korte Frøken-Stand*, I, 7.

Page 112.\* *Ibid.*, II, 2.

Page 112.† *Ibid.*, II, 7, 8.

Page 114. *Ibid.*, III, 4.

Page 115.\* *Les Femmes Savantes*, III, 3. Legrelle suggests (p. 330) other examples, *Mélicerte*, I, 1, and the conversation between Alain and Georgette in *L'École des Femmes*, I, 3. The quarrel between Cléante, Harpagon, and Élisè (*L'Avare*, I, 4) is also a case in point.

Page 115.† Legrelle gives as an example *Jacob von Tyboe*, III, 5, where the braggart soldier and Stygotius, the pedant, quarrel. See also *Henrich og Pernille*, II, 7, and *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*, I, 6.

Page 116.\* *Henrich og Pernille*, III, 3.

Page 116.† Legrelle does not agree with me on this point. He asserts, for example, that Molière's trick of making a phrase ridiculous by mere repetition, as the "le pauvre homme" of Orgon in *Tartuffe*, I, 4, and the "sans dot" of both Valère and Harpagon in *L'Avare*, I, 5, is used by Holberg. Unfortunately for his argument, the principal example that he gives (pp. 338, 339) of this repetition in Holberg, the "ligesaa hos os" in *Ulysses von Ithacia*, II, 2, is demonstrably modelled on a scene in one of the comedies in Gherardi's *Théâtre Italien* (see *infra*, chap. iv).

Page 119. *Den Honnette Ambition*, I, 3.

Page 121.\* *Den Politiske Kandestøber*, III, 4.

Page 121.† Page 70.

Page 123. *Erasmus Montanus*, I, 5.

Page 125. *Den Ellefte Junii*, V, 9.

Page 133. *Mascarade*, II, 3.

Page 139.\* Robert Prutz (*Ludvig Holberg*, pp. 148-154, passim) makes a number of general assertions about Holberg's relation to Gherardi's collection. The following two are characteristic. He says (p. 149) that Holberg took from Gherardi "nicht nur den Stoff seiner meisten Stücke, nicht nur einzelne Reden u. Gegenreden, sondern auch ganze angeführte Scene u. Situationen." Again, he says: "Holberg entfernte die abstracten Masken der *Commedia dell' Arte* u. setzte an ihre Stelle lebendige wirkliche Charaktere." Prutz makes no attempt either to establish definite points of resemblance or to define with any precision Holberg's debt to this popular form of drama. All other critics who have discussed Holberg's relation to Gherardi have contented themselves with giving lists of borrowed comic devices. Dietrich (*Pulcinella*, etc., p. 273) realized the need of a thorough study of this question. He says: "Es würde nicht schwer sein, die Entstehung seines [Holberg's] lustigen Dienerpaares, Hendrik [*sic*] und Pernille, näher nachzuweisen. . . . Aber die Quellenuntersuchung müsste doch wohl . . . viel umfassender und schärfer geführt werden."

Page 139.† Flaminio Scala, author of the earliest and most important Canevas, belonged to the company of Gelosi which began to play in Blois, January 25, 1577. Francesco Andreini, the author of the equally important *Bravure del Capitano Spavento*, played with his remarkable wife, Isabella, in Paris from 1605 to 1607. Dominique Biancolelli, who played in Paris from 1660 to 1688, made a collection called *Scenario de Dominique*. And finally, Evaristo Gherardi, the author of the French collection most important for our immediate purpose, played in France from October, 1689, when he made his début as Arlequin, until the Italians were dismissed in 1697.

Page 140.\* For an interesting account of Molière's relations with this troupe, see *Molière et les Italiens*, in *Le Moliériste*, November 1, 1879, pp. 237 ff. The Italian actors received a much greater royal subsidy at this time than any other company.

After 1664 it received 15,000 livres, while the large consolidated company which later played in the Hotel Guenegaud never received more than 12,000 livres.

Page 140.† Holberg's acquaintance with the *commedia dell' arte* as played in Rome (see chap. i, p. 16) ought to be recalled in this connection. He describes (*Autobiography*, p. 96) his relation with the Italian comedians as follows: "The loneliness in the house where I lived lasted until the end of December. But as soon as the old year was over and all the jugglers, pantomimers, actors and rope dancers in Italy streamed into Rome, the house was filled with comedians, who kept up their buffoonery far into the night, much to my annoyance. . . . After Christmas twelve bands of comedians came to Rome. Each group is accustomed to choose one comedy, which it plays day after day. The company lodged in our house, chose a play about a doctor, which was very much like Molière's *Le Médecin malgré lui*." Holberg's interest in the *commedia dell' arte* may have been first stimulated by his association with these comedians.

Page 141. Pulcinella (French, Polichinello) has been thought to be a resurrection of Maccus, the *minus albus* of the *Fabulae Attellanae* (see Riccoboni's *Histoire du Théâtre Italien*, pp. 316 ff. ; Sand's *Masques et Buffons* ; and A. Dietrich's *Pulcinella*, etc., chap. x, passim). In France, Polichinelle early (circa 1630) left the comedians for troupes of marionettes. He later had his own theatre. Polichinelle also travelled to England about 1688, where he became, in Punch of the puppet shows, the monster of murderous ferocity that he has remained to this day.

Page 142. Besides these men, the following authors, known also in French literature, wrote plays which appear in Gherardi's collection, La Motte, Le Noble, and Montchesney ; the following, who are known only through their work for the Italians, Noland de Fatourville, Brugière de Barante, Louis Biancolelli, and Evaristo Gherardi ; and the two following, who are mere names, Mongin and Borspan.



Page 143. The following plays in Gherardi are formed on a plot consisting of these four principal elements: *Arlequin, Lingère du Palais*; *Arlequin, Empereur dans la Lune*; *La Cause des Femmes*; *Le Divorce*; *Mezzetin, Grand Sophy de Perse*; *Arlequin, Homme à Bonne Fortune*; *La Coquette*; *Arlequin, Ésope*; *Les Chinois*; *La Fille de bon Sens*; *Les Mal-Assortis*; *Les Originaux*; *Le Bel Esprit*; *Arlequin, Défenseur du beau Sexe*; *Le Retour de la Foire de Bezons*; *Les Bains de la Porte Saint-Bernard*.

Page 144.\* These are *Jean de France*, *Jacob von Tyboe*, *Den Stundesløse*, *Pernilles Korten Frøken-Stand*, *Don Ramudo*, *Den Honnette Ambition*, *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*, *Kilde-Reysen*.

Page 144.† *Den Politiske Kandestøber* and *Gert Westphaler*.

Page 145. In only one play, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, does the plot appear in all its formality. In *Le Malade Imaginaire* there is the important difference which I have indicated.

Page 149.\* Many of the details of this costume, e.g., the black mask and the pointed hat, are inheritances from the more primitive Pulcinella. The sword is apparently a souvenir of the time when he was usually the servant of the Capitano Spavento. In twenty of the forty-two comedies in Scala's collection he plays the part. The interrelation of the various figures of the *commedia dell'arte*, each one popular in some one locality, is, however, so complicated a subject that one can pronounce definitely on any of these points only after more extended and careful investigations than have hitherto been made. In one or two cases Arlequin took off his mask and made an attempt to identify himself with the character he was impersonating. See, e.g., *La Fille Savante*, scene 8 (G. III, 84). In *Les deux Arlequins*, we know from a note of Gherardi's (II, 298) that Arlequin, in parodying Baron, the actor, took off his conventional costume.

Page 149.† Angelo Constantini invented the character Mezzetin in 1683. He had been the understudy of the famous Dominique Biancolelli for the rôle of Arlequin. Tired of being a

mere substitute, he invented the new figure, so that he could appear every time the company presented a play. To his new part he inevitably brought most of the good points of his old one. Mezzetin is, indeed, so faithful a copy of Arlequin that in one play, *Les deux Arlequins*, he is called *Arlequin cadet*. When Dominique died in August, 1688, Constantini naturally played the part of Arlequin, but because of the deep respect which the whole company felt for Dominique's memory, the old understudy kept the name and costume of Mezzetin. In October, 1689, Evaristo Gherardi presented Arlequin again in his own proper person. In the plays given, therefore, between the death of Dominique and the début of Gherardi (*Le Marchand Dupé*, *Colombine*, *Femme Vengée*, *La Descente de Mezzetin aux Enfers*, and *Mezzetin, Grand Sophy de Perse*), it is only fair to regard Mezzetin as Arlequin playing under a different stage name.

Page 151. For an interesting discussion of the site of this spring and the customs which grew up around it, see *Varvov Kilde og Holbergs "Kilderejse,"* by R. M. Stolpe, *Dan. Sam.*, 2d series, III, 77-79.

Page 153.\* *La Cause des Femmes*, scene 5 (G. II, 25), "Arlequin déguisé en Baron;" *La Critique de la Cause des Femmes*, scene 3 (G. II, 70), "Arlequin en Chevalier;" *Le Marchand Dupé*, I, 6 (G. II, 169), "Mezzetin en Marquis;" *Arlequin, Homme à Bonne Fortune*, scene 5 (G. II, 367), "Arlequin en Vicomte;" *La Coquette*, III, 3 (G. II, 156), "Arlequin en Marquis;" *Les Chinois*, I, 6 (G. IV, 179), "Arlequin en Baron de la Dindonnière;" *Les Originiaux*, II, 3 (G. IV, 332), "Arlequin en le Vidame de Cotignac;" *Les Momies d'Egypte*, I, 4 (G. VI, 273), "Arlequin en Baron de Gronpignac."

Page 153.† *La Cause des Femmes* (G. I, 28) and *Les Momies d'Egypte* (G. VI, 273).

Page 153.‡ The first disguise he assumes in *Les Chinois* (G. IV, 179); the second in *Les Originiaux* (G. IV, 332).

Page 155.\* *Den Honnette Ambition*, II, 4.

Page 155.† In *Henrich og Pernille*, where Henrich impersonates Leander, he too adopts some of the traditions of Arlequin's gentleman disguise. He enters in his porte-chaise (I, 6), shouting to his servants, and then obsequiously begs pardon for his precipitate entrance. He also makes the same efforts to appear to be on terms of easy familiarity with nobility. Mascarille, in *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, of course, makes his entrance in a porte-chaise and is also beaten out by his master, as is Henrich at the end of *Den Honnette Ambition*. Yet the disguise of Mascarille has not as many points of contact with Henrich as that of Arlequin. It seems to be itself a clever adaptation, for the purpose of a special travesty, of the same Italian tradition; for Arlequin used to disguise as a noble gentleman long before the plays in Gherardi's collection were composed. (Cf. *Il Lunatico* in *Scenario di Dominique Parfaict*, p. 169, where Arlequin appears as Marquis de Blanchefleur).

Page 156.\* *La Matrone d'Ephèse* (G. I, 18 ff.) and *La Lingère du Palais* (G. I, 65 ff.). It is significant that both examples of this disguise occur in two of the earliest and most fragmentary of the plays in Gherardi's collection. The French authors who wrote for the Italians discarded this disguise as too farcical to appear in any of their plays that were deliberately composed.

Page 156.† *Mascarade*, I, 11, and *Uden Hoved og Hale*, II, 6.

Page 156.‡ Riccoboni (p. 65) describes these lazzi as follows: "Nous appelons lazzi ce que l'Arlequin ou les autres Acteurs masqués font au milieu d'une Scène qu'ils interrompent par des épouvantes ou par des badineries étrangères au sujet de la matière que l'on traite, et à laquelle on est pourtant toujours obligé de revenir: or ce sont ces inutilités qui ne consistent que dans le jeu que l'Acteur invente, suivant son génie, que les Comédiens Italiens nomment lazzi." The form "lazzi" was used both as a singular and a plural by the time of Gherardi. The origin of the word is obscure. It is perhaps connected with the Tuscan *lacci* bands, because the physical

farce bound the action together. Cf. a discussion by E. Re : *La Commedia veneziana e il Goldoni* (*Giornale Storico*, LVIII, 367 ff.).

Page 157. G. I, 114.

Page 158.\* *Melampe*, III, 4. See also *Hexerie*, III, i, where Arv is compelled by the exigencies of an imaginary dialogue to drag himself about by the hair.

Page 158.† Legrelle (p. 344) asserts that this comic device, especially as it appears in *Melampe*, is a copy of a similar device practised in Molière's *Amphitryon* (I, 1). There the slave rehearses the announcement of Amphitryon's victory to his wife Alcmène by an imaginary conversation, in which he lets his lantern represent the lady. He speaks, of course, for both himself and Alcmène, undoubtedly making appropriate changes in his voice and manner of speech. But the physical farce which is the important part of the trick in both the Italian and Danish comedy is wholly absent from this scene of Molière. Therefore, even if the device as it appears in Gherardi were a modification of Sosie's actions here, I believe that Holberg none the less adopted it from the Italian source, after Sosie's trick had been transformed to suit the characteristic antics of Arlequin.

Page 159. This disguise Arlequin adopts in *Arlequin, Empereur dans la Lune*, *Arlequin, Chevalier du Soleil*, *Arlequin, Homme à Bonne Fortune*, and *Le Bel Esprit*.

Page 160.\* *Don Ramudo*, V, 4.

Page 160.† It is interesting to note that Holberg knew that the potentate disguise was as much a tradition of Gherardi's theatre as of Molière's. When Isabella and Leonora are inventing their plot to pass off the lover as the Prince of Abyssinia, they decide that, bold as it is, there is more reason to count on the success of his disguise than upon similar ones in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Arlequin, Empereur dans la Lune* (*Don Ramudo*, IV, i).

Page 161. *La Fille de bon Sens*, I, 7-13. A Danish translation of this comedy was played, May 24, 1728, under the title *Mange Hunde om et Been*. See Overskou, p. 250, for contemporary advertisements of the play.

Page 163.\* G. II, 175.

Page 163.† *Den Stundesløse*, II, 10.

Page 164.\* *Uden Hoved og Hale*, III, 2.

Page 164.† *Pernilles Korte Frøken-Stand*, III, 7.

Page 165.\* G. IV, 77.

Page 165.† She is palpably the manager and director of the plot in *Colombine*, *Avocat*; *La Cause des Femmes*; *Le Divorce*; *Le Marchand Dupê* (since, for reasons already given, there was Arlequin in this play, her plans here naturally do not involve his execution of them): *La Coquette* and *Les Bains de la Porte Saint-Bernard*, *La Fille de bon Sens*, and *La Fontaine de Sapience*.

Page 166. Arlequin and Colombine marry at the close of the following: *Arlequin, Empereur dans la Lune*; *Le Marchand Dupê* (here she marries Pasquariel, because there is no Arlequin in the play); *Mezzetin, Grand Sophy de Perse* (here it is Mezzetin for the same reason as above); *Arlequin, Homme à Bonne Fortune*; *Les deux Arlequins*; *Ulysse et Circé*; *La Fille de bon Sens*; *Les Promenades de Paris*.

Page 167.\* In the following plays, Pernille invents the plot in which she makes the disguises of Henrich play an important part: *Jean de France*, *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*, *Den Stundesløse*, *Den Honnette Ambition*, *Kilde-Reysen*. In the following plays, Pernille also invents the plot, which she carries on, however, with little or no help from Henrich, by her own disguises or by the help of other characters than Henrich: *Den pantsatte Bonde-Dreng*, *Gert Westphaler*, *Philosophus udi egen Indbildning*, and *Republiquen*.

Page 167.† In the following plays, Henrich and Pernille marry:

*Jean de France, Mascarade, Henrich og Pernille*, and *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*. In Henrich's last speech in *Kilde-Reysen*, there is a hint of marriage: "Denne gode Jomfrue er dog ikke den første, som er bleven cureret ved Kilden, vil og ikke blive den sidst. Er det ikke sandt Pernille?"

Page 168. *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*, IV, 10.

Page 169. Page 197.

Page 170. Professor Vilhelm Andersen's excellent essay on Holberg's Henrik (*Litteratur Billeder*, Anden Samling, Cop., 1907) has suggested to me many of the ideas about Henrik which I express here.

Page 171. *Den Politiske Kandestøber*, I, 6.

Page 173. *Mascarade*, II, 3.

Page 174.\* *Den Stundesløse*, II, 3.

Page 174.† He appears in the following plays, in all of which he is called a "Gaards Karl: " *Jean de France, Mascarade, Henrich og Pernille, Hæxerie, Den Honnette Ambition, Julestue, Kilde-Rejsen*, and *Republiquen*.

Page 175.\* Pedrolino is more than the reappearance of Pagliaccio under a new name. He has also inherited traits of a figure called Bertoldo or Bertoldino. This figure owes its existence to a certain Giulio Cesare Croce (1550-1609), of Bologna. He was an improviser and popular poet who sang on the streets the adventures of a fictitious Bertoldo. These songs were so popular that he decided to print them. His first collection he called *The Life of Bertoldo*, the second *The Life of Bertoldino*. The enormous popularity of these figures extended to the theatre, so that by the end of the sixteenth century every company which played the *commedia dell' arte* had its Bertoldo or Bertoldino. The latter figure, a sort of farmer, a mixture of naïveté and rustic shrewdness and a great enunciator of peasant aphorisms, had a particular vogue. From this Bertoldino, Padrolino, and through him Pierrot, has inherited much.

Page 175.† The first recorded mention of Pierrot occurs in *La Suite du Festin de Pierre*, first performed February 4, 1673. (See MS. 483, 484, *Bibliothèque de Grand Opéra de Paris, Catalogue Soleinne*, Vol. V, No. 329, or *Copie de la Traduction du Scenarior de Dominique*, MS. in Bibliothèque Nationale; see *Catalogue Soleinne*, Vol. III, No. 3348, fol. 169.) “Cette scène se passe à la campagne. Je [Arlequin] fais tomber aux pieds de Spezzafer le cor de chasse dont il sonne, en suite en courant, je culbute Pierrot,” etc. — Quoted by Klinger, p. 154, in his excellent description of Pierrot, to which I am indebted for much of my description.

Page 176.\* Moland, in *Molière et la Comédie Italienne*, asserts that the idea of this figure was suggested to Giraton by Pierrot in Molière’s *Don Juan*. It seems highly improbable to me that the Italian actor learned to know an old traditional figure of his own theatre from a modified copy of Molière.

Page 176.† In *Arlequin Ésope*; *Les deux Arlequins*; *Ulysse et Circé*; *Les Promenades de Paris*, and *Le Retour de la Foire de Bezons*.

Page 176.‡ The name Pantalone occurs but once in Gherardi. I have used it as the generic name of the *amorosa*’s old father. Pierrot is his servant in *La Critique de la Cause des Femmes*; *La Coquette*; *L’Opéra de Campagne*; *Les Chinois*; *Les Originiaux*; *Le Bel Esprit*; *Arlequin, Défenseur du beau Sexe*; *La Fausse Coquette*; *La Thèse des Dames*. He is the doctor’s servant in *La Fille de bon Sens*; *Les Bains de la Porte Saint-Bernard*; *Pasquin et Marforio*.

Page 176.§ G. V, 41.

Page 176.|| G. II, 366.

Page 177. *Jean de France*, V, 2.

Page 179. *Ibid.*, II, 4.

Page 180.\* *Kilde-Rejsen*, III, i.

Page 180.† *Mascarade*, I, 2.

Page 180.† *Jule Stue*, 8.

Page 182. The evidence of names, often tempting, is here thoroughly inconclusive. The *amoruso* was always given the stage name of the actor who played the part. In Gherardi's collection he was called Léandre only in pieces 43-55, when C. V. Romagnesi played the part. Holberg may have happened on the name there or in the two plays of Molière in which the lover is called Léandre. The name was, in any case, a good one for a lover. The evidence drawn from the *amoruso* is even less convincing. She is usually called Isabelle, although she is also called Olivette, Angélique, Lucile, and Élise.

Page 183. Skavlan, pp. 191 ff. He prefaces this characteristic sentence to his list: "If one runs over Gherardi's *Théâtre Italien*, he will find various details which Holberg seems to have borrowed." See also Rahbek, VI, passim, where he discusses Holberg's relation to Gherardi's collection in this fragmentary manner.

Page 184. Jupiter appears in this way in *Le Divorce*, I, i; Proteus and Glaucus in *Arlequin Protée*, G. I, 69.

Page 186. G. II, 167.

Page 187. G. II, 171. Thalia descends to perform a similar office in the prologue of *Les Originiaux*, G. IV, 314.

Page 188. First printed in Schwartz, *Lommebog for Skuespilere*, 1786. For the text, see Overskou, I, 190-199. The full title of this play was *Den Danske Comedies Ligbegjaengelse med Thalias Afskeedstale, forstillet til allersidste Slutning af de Danske Acteurs, den 25 Februari 1727*. For the text, see Rahbek, VI, 516-526. Rahbek remarks (p. 528) on the obvious resemblance between these two plays.

Page 191. For a complete list of parodies of individual scenes, see *La Descente de Mezzetin aux Enfers*, IV; *Les Aventures aux Champs-Élysées*, III, 4-8; and *La Naissance d'Amadis*.

Page 193.\* *Ulysse et Circé*, I, 9; and *Ulysses von Ithacia*, III, 6.

Page 193.† *Ulysse et Circé*, II, 12.



Page 194. Among them is the following, which seems to me obvious (noticed by Prutz, pp. 753 ff.): In *Arlequin, Empereur dans la Lune* (G. I, 753 ff.), Arlequin, disguised as the emperor of the moon, discusses the affairs of his realm with a doctor and Columbine. To every bit of explanation that he gives, either one or the other of his interlocutors, astonished at the identity of conditions there with those on the earth, exclaims: "C'est tout comme ici." This phrase is repeated seven times. Finally, Arlequin gives a long description of the society women of the moon, which fits so perfectly the women of the world that the doctor and Columbine cry out in amazement: "C'est tout comme ici." In *Ulysses von Ithacia*, Chilian meets a Trojan outside the walls of his city. This stranger explains conditions in Troy, to which Chilian replies with a similarly repeated "Ligesaa hos os" ("Just the same with us"). The Trojan: "The greatest virtue with us is to waste more than one can earn." Chilian: "Just the same with us," etc. Holberg's humorous quip is practically a translation of the similar Italian one. It is not Molière's illuminative "Sans dot," or "Le pauvre homme," debased to mere foolish iteration. Other similarities, such as the following, are interesting only because they show how thoroughly Holberg knew Gherardi's collection and how systematically he borrowed from it to enliven his dialogue: cf. *Arlequin, Empereur dans la Lune*, G. I, 131: Arlequin (to Doctor): "Parlez, êtes-vous de cette ville, ou la ville, est-elle de vous?" with *Ulysses von Ithacia*, V, 2 — Chilian: "God-dag, Landsmand, er du fra denne Bye, eller er denne Bye fra dig?"

Page 195. This very incident is found in one of Gherardi's plays, *Parodie de Bérénice*, scene v, in *Arlequin Protée* (I, 93, 94). There Arlequin is taking part of Titus in parody, when an old-clothes man (*fripier*) enters and strips him of his rented costume. This interruption ends the parody of Bérénice just as the similar interruption ends Holberg's parody.

Page 200. For a list of plays in which she appears, see Fournel's *Le Théâtre au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, p. 111.

Page 201. Fournel's *Le Théâtre au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, pp. 400 ff.

Page 202. *Asinaria*, V, 1, 2.

Page 203. This disguise may have suggested the similar one in *Den Forvandlede Brudgom*. Not only the disguises but also the purposes of both of them (to make love, in the guise of a soldier, to an old woman) are alike. Montfleury's play was presented often during the early years of the eighteenth century, so that Holberg almost certainly knew it. In 1714, it was played four times; in 1715, twice; during the years of his later stay in Paris, it seems not to have been played at all.

Page 204. One of Rotrou's comedies is curiously enough called *L'Heureux Naufrage* (1634). It is an excessively romantic tragi-comedy, devoted to the love adventures of a prince of Epirus who is shipwrecked on the Dalmatian coast. Holberg's *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud* has absolutely no connection with this play, so that the identity of title is probably entirely fortuitous.

Page 208. *Le Mercure Galant*, IV, 3.

Page 212.\* See Winkel-Horn, p. 158.

Page 212.† A complete edition of Legrand's works was published in 1751. The influence of his *Phutus* upon Holberg, therefore, may have been exerted through purely literary channels.

Page 212.‡ *Holbergs Udvalgte Skrifter*, VI, 427.

Page 214. There is no evidence to show that Holberg knew any of the work of Cervantes, except *Don Quixote*. *To Rule a Wife and to Have a Wife* was given at the London theatres during Holberg's stay in England. Genest (pp. 358, 365, 384) notes the following performances: (1) November 30, 1706, at The Haymarket; (2) February 12, 1707, at The Haymarket; (3) December 17, 1707, at The Drury Lane.

Page 216. *Epistler*, V, 166 (Epistle No. 506 a).

Page 219. *Epistler*, V, 122 (Epistle No. 493).

Page 223. Saint-Évremond's *Sir Politick Would-Be* has often been regarded as the source of Holberg's *Den Politiske Kandestøber* (see Rahbek, VI, 26 ff.; Skavlan, VII, 195; and Albrecht, *Lessings Plagiate*, I, 662). The author wrote this play in England about 1662, undoubtedly in collaboration with the Duke of Buckingham and M. d'Aubigny. (See *Œuvres*, I, 597.) These three authors have consciously elevated the figure of Sir Politick from the subordinate place which he holds in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* to the central position in their "humour" comedy. Holberg knew this play, which he mentions at least twice (*Just Justesens Betænkning over Satiriske Skrifter*, and in *Helte Historier*, I, 176), calling it quite properly "en engelsk Komædie." Sir Politick is much less likely the prototype of Hermann of Bremen than another English figure, the Political Upholsterer, whose relation to the Political Tinker is discussed in chapter vi, page 269. The situation in the *dénouement* of the two plays is, I admit, vaguely alike. Both Sir Politick and Hermann have been encouraged by a plot of disguises to believe themselves advanced to positions of honour and influence. Both dupes imagine persons of simple, even degraded, condition to possess important social rank. Both make heroic efforts to receive their guests with the ceremony that they consider proper. Yet Sir Politick, mincing and simpering as he forms the receiving line in his salon to greet the harlot whom he believes to be the wife of the Doge of Venice, is a spectacle different in humorous kind from that of Hermann, spitting on his hands from sheer excitement as he tries to show his wife how to make the neighbour's dirty woolly dog behave like a lapdog. The social incompetence of Hermann and his Geske for the parts of mayor and wife is, then, only vaguely like the tawdry elegance of Sir Politick. All the similarities between the two plays seem, indeed, unimportant enough to be regarded as fortuitous.

. . . . .

Page 224. Each of the assemblies of the chattering women was published originally as a separate work, all during the year 1622. These eight were first collected in 1723 and published under the title of *Recueil Général des Caquets de l'Accouchée*.

Of this collected work, six editions were published between the years 1623 and 1630.

Page 226.\* Reimpressions of the 1499 edition were made in Paris, 1595; Rouen, 1596; Rouen, 1606; Lyon, 1607; and Paris, 1620. Any one of these editions may have fallen into Holberg's hands in those libraries of Paris which he tells us that he visited day after day during the year 1715-16. That general interest in this satire had not lapsed in Holberg's time is proved by two contemporary reprints of the 1499 edition at The Hague in 1726 and 1734. See Brunet, IV, 1030.

Page 226.† *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, p. 27: "Or a grant soussi pour querir ce qu'il faut aux commères et nourrisses et matrones qui y seront pour garder la dame tant comme elle couchera, qui beuvront de vin autant l'en bouteroit en une bote."

Page 231. Other relations which have been thought to exist between Holberg's plays and *Le Roman Comique* (Albrecht, I, 6; I, 591) seem extremely fanciful. The similarities between *Kilde-Reysen* and the story of *Les Deux Frères Rivaux* (Part II, chap. xix, ed. Fournel, II, 83-117) are very general and conventional; while those between *Den Vaegelsindede* and *L'Histoire de la Capricieuse* in Offray's *Suite du Roman Comique* (ed. Fournel, II, 280-290) are inexact and thoroughly unconvincing.

Page 240. *Terrae Filius*, pp. 108 ff.

Page 241. These ingenious theories are suggested in Olsvig, *Om Holbergs saakaldte Selvbiografi*, passim.

Page 242. Albert Thura's *Idea Hist. Litt. Danorum*, quoted Olsvig, col. 16.

Page 244. He states that he has read Humphrey Prideaux, Burnet, and Rymer's *Foedera* (Winkel-Horn, p. 231). He also shows familiarity with the following: *Historical Passages from Private Passages of State*, 1618-48, by John Rushworth,

London, 1659 ; (2) *The History of the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of the National Knowledge*, by Thomas Sprat, 1667 ; (3) *Account of Denmark as it was in the Year 1694*, by Robert Molesworth, London, 1694 ; (4) *The Chronicles of the Kings of England, written in the Manner of the Ancient Jewish Historians*, by Nathan Ben Saggi, a Priest of the Jews, London, 1740 (this work is not, to be sure, serious history ; it is merely a *jeu d'esprit* of some anonymous cleverling, whom Holberg censures for his impious imitation of Biblical style) ; (5) Thomas Gordon's English translation of Tacitus ; (6) *The Trial and Sufferings of Mr. Isaac Martin, who was put into the Inquisition in Spain for the Sake of the Protestant Religion*, by Isaac Martin, London, 1723 ; (7) *Travels and Observations relating to Several Parts of Barbary and the Levant*, by Thomas Shaw, London, 1738. The general progress of religious and philosophical thought in England he seems to have followed even more zealously than the productions of English historical scholarship. "I have read everything that England in our time has vomited up against religion," he says (Winkel-Horn, p. 243), "but whatever disturbance Toland, Collins, Tindal, Woolaston, The Moral Philosopher, and others waked in my mind, others who have boldly come to the defence of the Christian religion have set at rest." He shows familiarity with Bacon's *Novum Organum* and *The New Atlantis* (Ep. 361 ; II, 167), and with Ralph Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, as well as with Nehemiah Grew's objection to this system expressed in his *Cosmologia Sacra* (Ep. 50 ; I, 50). He refers to both Hobbes and Locke (Ep. 144 ; II, 204) ; to William Whiston's theory of the flood, given in his *A New Theory of the Earth from its Origin to the Consummation of all Things* (Ep. 4 ; I, 118 ; also Ep. 82 ; II, 203) ; and to Newton, whose theory he rejected in favour of the Cartesian theory of vortices. He mentions favourably William King's answer to Bayle, *De Origine Mali* (Ep. 322 ; II, 62). He refers to Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* (Ep. 119 ; II, 128), and makes a long translation from one of the theological works of George Hickes (Ep. 364 ; II, 176).

Page 246.\* This entry has been noted by a number of students of Holberg; e.g., by Olsvig in his *Om Holbergs saakaldte Selvbiografi*, and in the preface to the one-act drama on Holberg's life written by Anna Borch and called *Hvorfor? Holbergske Studie i en Act*.

Page 246.† Holberg's first serious historical investigations were apparently undertaken there. He says of his *Europæiske Rigers Historie*: "Dette Arbeide begyndte jeg i England paa Bodley's Bibliotek, hvor der gaves mig rigelig Adgang til at benytte Bøger tjenlige til dette Brug," etc.

Page 246.‡ Dolbell, I, 206.

Page 246.§ Among Rawlinson MS. Letters in the Bodleian, vol. ii, letter i a.

Page 247.\* *Om Holbergs saakaldte Selvbiografi*, col. 155.

Page 247.† Professor Schofield has suggested to me that Holberg's advanced opinions about the education and the rights of women developed while he was in England. Elizabeth Elstob, the Anglo-Saxon scholar, was a close friend of Dr. Smalridge, Dr. Hickes, Humphrey Wanley, and their associates in the study of Northern antiquities. During the years 1706-08, to be sure, she did not live in Oxford. She was then in London with her brother, preparing her edition of the *English-Saxon Homily on the Nativity of Saint Gregory*, which appeared in 1709. All the phases of that work, however, were almost surely discussed by her literary friends, patrons, and sponsors at Oxford. One of the most interesting of these phases must have been the question which she considers at length in her preface. There she defends vigorously a woman's right to become a scholar, and incidentally explains what she considers the proper sphere for woman. Holberg might well have heard her ideas defended by her patrons and have thus learned to regard them sympathetically. It is significant that every one of Holberg's arguments for the emancipation of woman he bases upon the notion which Elizabeth Elstob emphasized, that woman's intellect is inferior to

man's, not by nature, but because of its inferior education. This revolutionary idea came naturally to Elizabeth Elstob, who was eager to justify her career both to herself and to the world. Holberg's enunciation of the same idea has hitherto seemed extraordinary and completely inexplicable.

Page 248. Genest records performances of the following plays of Shakespeare during the time that Holberg was in England: in tragedy, *Hamlet*, *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*; in chronicle history, *Henry IV*; in romantic comedy, *The Tempest*; in pure comedy, *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Page 250.\* Philipsen, in *Den Holbergske Literaturs Historie og Bibliographi*, pp. 38-41, indicates the three points of similarity that I have mentioned (along with one more too inexact and trivial to notice) as existing between *Jeppe paa Bjerget* and the older *Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare's source. All of the points do appear there as well as in Shakespeare's play, but Holberg could have hit upon that old play only by a miracle of chance.

Page 250.† July 4, 1706, and October 15, 1707, both times at The Haymarket. These performances show that the play was well known in Holberg's London, in spite of the fact (mentioned by Rahbek, VI, 164) that Steele (*Tatler*, No. 231; September 30, 1710) tells the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* as though it were original with him.

Page 251.\* *Mindre Poetiske Skrifter*, p. 121.

Page 251.† Genest records the following performances: *Volpone*, December at The Haymarket, and April 27, 1708, at The Drury Lane; *The Silent Woman*, January 1, 1707, and October 28, 1707, at The Haymarket, and April 21, 1708, at The Drury Lane; *Bartholomew Fair*, August 12 and October 22, 1707, at The Haymarket, and August 26, 1708, at The Drury Lane.

Page 252.\* I am indebted to Miss Elizabeth Woodbridge's excellent analysis of Jonson's comic art (*Studies in Jonson's Comedy*) for help in this comparison.

Page 252.† Mermaid Edition of *Farquhar*, Introd., p. 26.

Page 253. Cf. *Jean de France*, I, 2; *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*, I, 3; *Uden Hoved og Hale*, I, i; *Erasmus Montanus*, I, passim, particularly 6; *Den Stundesløse*, I, i; *Den Honnlette Ambition*, I, 2; *Don Ramudo*, I, 2; *Philosophus udi egen Indbildning*, I, i; *Den Politiske Kandestøber*, I, 2; *Gert Westphaler*, I, i; *Det Arabiske Pulver*, I, 3; and *Jacob von Tyboe*, I, i.

Page 259. *George Farquhar*, Introd., p. 24.

Page 260. This bit of imitation has already been pointed out more than once. See Skavlan, p. 196; and Brandes, *Ludvig Holberg*, p. 212.

Page 262. The first of these verses closes *Plutus*; the second, *Jeppe paa Bjerget*. The following plays are also closed by a bit of doggerel: *Den Politiske Kandestøber*, *Barselstuen*, *Jean de France*, *Den Ellefte Junii*, *Ulysses*, *Uden Hoved og Hale*, *Hexerie*, *Den Forvandelte Brudgrom*, *Den Stundesløse*, and *Sganarelles Rejse*.

Page 265. Werlauff (p. 14) calls attention in this connection to the tobacco-councils of the Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm I, at which news-sheets were read and commented upon by the learned smokers assembled. He also mentions (*Ibid.*, note 5) a tavern in Copenhagen where the guests used to form a *Collegium Politicum*, not unlike that in Holberg's play.

Page 270. No. 108; suggested first by Olsvig in *Det store Vendepunkt i Holbergs Liv*, p. 63.

Page 272. The first collected edition of *The Tatler* was issued in 1710-11. Holberg may have seen the original sheets of *The Spectator*, which were published in monthly parts, or more probably the first edition in octavo, seven volumes of which were published during the first months of 1713, and the eighth in 1715.

Page 273. Olsvig, p. 82.

Page 276.\* See, e.g., Prutz, p. 163: "Es muss, meinen wir, zugestanden werden dass Holberg auch in seinen Dichtungen



zum mindesten ebenso sehr Moralist als Dichter ist. . . . Wir geben zu, dass dies sehr undramatisch u. langweilig ist und wenn es der Holbergschen Komödie, trotz des unverwüsthlichen Kerns von komischer Kraft u. Laune u. volksthümlicher Stimmung der darin steckt, bei uns in neuerer Zeit in Ganzen so wenig gelungen worden — so liegt das wohl zum grössten Theil eben in dieser moralisirenden Farbung."

Page 276.† *Tatler*, Nos. 40, 47, 121.

Page 283. Cf. *Tatler*, No. 41; I, 338 (Steele's defence of his critical method), with the *Det Lykkelige Skibbrud*, V, passim; *Tatler*, No. 173; III, 10 ff. (a satire on the inefficiency of a polite education), with *Den Stundesløse*, I, 5; *Tatler*, Nos. 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, and 39 (attacks on duelling), with *Den Vaegelsindede*, III, 3.

Page 289.\* *Hagedorns Werke*, V, 291, 292.

Page 289.† The titles of these four were: (1) *Om Menniskens Idraet, Vandel og Maneere i disse Dage*; (2) *Om Alamodisk Klaededragt*; (3) *Om Alamodisk Sprog og Titler*; (4) *Om Poeteri og Rimdigter*.

Page 290. Ed. Paludan, p. 101. Satire IV, 259 ff.

Page 291.\* Scene 13.

Page 291.† In this same satire, Lauremberg ridicules passing fashions in speech. In a long list he contrasts the good old words for many common things with the fashionable equivalents of the day. See III, 176 ff. Cf. the following lines which the Danish translator left in the original even in his version:

*Wol da ein Schlungel was, de is nu ein Cojon,  
Wat damals was fort, fort, is nu allohu, allohu.*

Contrasts of exactly this sort are frequently made in Holberg. Cf. *Erasmus Montanus*, I, 2, where Jeppe says: "In my youth people did n't talk here the way they do now. What used to be called a 'boy' they now call a 'laquey,'" etc.

Page 291.‡ Skavlan (p. 196) suggests that *Jean de France* has

been modelled on Wycherley's *M. de Paris*, in the *Gentleman Dancing Master*. E. Gegas (*København Dagbladet*, 1884, No. 172) believes *Jean de France* to be an imitation of Moreto's *El Lindo Don Diego*. This seems *a priori* a very improbable source, and considering the existence of Lauberg's satire, ridiculously remote.

Page 292.\* I, 6.

Page 292.† Of the periodicals *Der Politische Stockfisch* (II, 2) and *Der Europæische Herold* (I, 4), and of the novels *Hercules* (I, 2),—called *Herculus* by Henrich,—*Der Politische Nachtisch* (I, 4), and *Herculiscus* are mentioned.

Page 293.\* The full title is *Das Verwirrte Haus Jacob oder das Gesicht der bestraften Rebellion an Stielcke und Lütze*.

Page 293.† Gaedertz, I, 183; repeated by Albrecht in his *Lessings Plagiate*, I-II, 583, with his usual amusing animus.

Page 293.‡ Holberg uses this same name, spelled a little differently, for one of the numerous women in his *Barselstuen*, II, 12 (Gedske Klokke).

Page 296. The plays were not often printed. For texts, see R. C. Prutz, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, Berlin, 1847, pp. 197-205.

Page 297. For an account of this man, see Werlauff, *Historiske Antegnelser*, pp. 290 ff.

Page 300. See Werlauff, p. 300, note 29.

Page 301.\* See *Holbergs Forhold til det ældre tyske Drama*, pp. 56 ff. A fuller title of the opera that he mentions was *Ulysses, in einem musicalischen Schauspiel . . . aufgeführt*.

Page 301.† Compare, for example, his

*Ich will mich nicht dem Henker drauf ergeben.  
Ein junges Weib  
Kann ohne Männer Zeitvertreib  
Nicht so viel Jahre leben,*

with *Ulysses von Ithacia*, V, 1, 2.

Page 302. These comedies were almost surely *The Clouds* and *Plutus*, both of which he could have read in Madame Dacier's French translation of 1688.

Page 303. *Epistle*, 557; V, 16. This reference to Regnard's play seems perfectly gratuitous. The play appears to have had no influence on Holberg.

Page 304. *Les Esprits*, a comedy by Pierre de Larivey (for the text, see E. Fournier, *Le Théâtre Français au XVI<sup>e</sup> et au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, pp. 57-89), introduces a servant playing the same trick of disguise into a situation plainly like that in the *Mostellaria* (II, 2). It is not necessary, however, to infer that Holberg knew and copied this play of Larivey, for, like all his plays, and like his very name, for that matter (*L'Arrivé* is a translation of the Italian *Giunto*, the name of the playwright's parents), it is taken from the Italian, namely from Lorenzino de Medici's *Aridosio*. The first thing that would occur to any Italian writing a version of the *Mostellaria*, would be to introduce into it the exceedingly common device of the *commedia dell' arte*. And Holberg introduced the same device because he, too, was very familiar with Italian comedy, and not because he copied an obscure French play.

Page 305. Skavlan (p. 176) points out that this name is a translation of *Pyrropolinices*.

Page 306. *Curculio* (IV, 2), like Henrich himself, impersonates the servant of the blustering captain, and so, like him, gets the slave girl into his own hands. *Planesium* learns by a ring that *Curculio* possesses that she is a sister of the brag-gart soldier, and so, like *Hyacinthe*, is a free woman.

Page 308. The following are two of his famous witticisms:

*Is ubi molestus magis est, quaeso, inquam, Strato,  
Eone es ferox, quia habes imperium inbelluas.*

EUNUCHUS, I, 414, 415.

*Quid agis, inquam, homo impudens  
Lefius tute es, et fulthaman tum quaeris.*

IBID., I, 425, 426.









